

Edgewood on Mission

Revised and Updated



Gather



Grow



Give



Go

Edgewood on Mission

Pastor Brian

I'd like you to picture a group of believers who made a covenant commitment to Christ and to each other to live on mission for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom. Living in a diverse community located on a major waterway, their area was a transportation hub with a key highway running east to west.

These Christ-followers determined to be "all-in" for Him and there were very few half-hearted pew potatoes among them. Christ had so changed their lives that they weren't interested in comfortable Christianity. Their faith so fired them up that they couldn't wait to *gather* with other believers, they were committed to *grow*, they *gave* what God had given to them and they looked for opportunities to *go* everywhere with the gospel.

This is what happened when the church in Thessalonica became spiritually calibrated according to 1 Thessalonians 1:8: ***"For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything."***

The image here is of a trumpet sounding forth, echoing off the hills and ravines. Paul says something similar about another church in Romans 1:8: ***"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."***

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when we live on mission by *gathering, growing, giving* and *going*, the same will be said of Edgewood! The word of the Lord will ring out from us in our homes, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our cities, our bi-state region, up and down the Mississippi and Rock rivers, along I-80 and to regions beyond with the aim that

ultimately the good news of the gospel will be trumpeted forth in every place around the world through the work and witness of our missionaries!

Preliminary Points

1. **It's time for the church to be the church.** We are living in precarious times. Coupled with shallow, me-centered spirituality in the American church we are facing unprecedented evil on a global scale as groups like ISIS seek to exterminate Christians. I sincerely believe the Rapture is right around the corner. Franklin Graham recently stated we are in the final hours before the return of Christ. I agree with his statement.

There are at least three biblical metaphors for Christ-followers that must become front and center for us—we are *athletes* who need discipline and self-control in order to win (1 Corinthians 9:25); we are *soldiers* who must be trained to fight spiritual battles (2 Timothy 2:3-4) and we are *pilgrims* who are passing through as we attempt to take as many with us to heaven as we can (1 Peter 1:1).

When I was lamenting the lethargic state of the American church in a recent staff meeting, Pastor Tim took us to Romans 13:11-12 – “***...now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.***” That reminds me of an old Keith Green song called, “Asleep in the Light.”

The world is sleeping in the dark that the church just can't fight

'Cause it's asleep in the light

*How can you be so dead, when you've been
so well fed*

*Jesus rose from the grave and you, you can't
even get out of bed*

2. **It's easy for a church to experience 'mission-drift.'** Just as believers can backslide, so too, a church can lose focus and begin meandering from its mission. It's vitally important for us to be mission-driven and that we correct any mission-drift that surfaces. Writing to the church in Ephesus, Jesus says these strong words in Revelation 2:5: ***"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent."***
3. **In the midst of multiple distractions, it's essential we stay focused on making disciples.** I want to make it clear we're not trying to be clever by coming up with something brand new. We are not changing our mission, which is to *equip people to reach their full potential in Jesus Christ*. I've simply been praying about how to best communicate what Edgewood is all about in a way that will keep us on mission so we don't go into maintenance mode. I'm not into slogans or canned approaches to church life. Instead, I echo what Moses said in Exodus 33:14: ***"If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here."***
4. **These four words are biblical, simple and easy-to-remember.** One reason I've been praying about a way to communicate what Edgewood is all about is because there are so many things going on here. I believe these four words capture what it is God is calling us to do.

I don't want these words to just remain on banners but to be on display in our lives. It's important we soak them up and be able to share them with others. Think of it as "4G Coverage." The second and fourth words rhyme so it's easy to remember – *Gather, Grow, Give and Go!*

GATHER

We gather with God's people

GROW

We grow best in groups

GIVE

We give what we've been given

GO

We go with the gospel

Gather

“Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25



Let's look at Hebrews 10:24-25, ***“Not neglecting to meet together.”*** If Jesus saw the value of attending synagogue every Sabbath, then shouldn't we be meeting with fellow believers every week? Check out Luke 4:16: ***“And on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue, as was His custom.”***

“As is the habit of some.” From my experience, most people who don't gather with God's people on a regular basis have not necessarily made a decision to not gather; it's just that they get out of the habit of coming. They miss one week, which leads to two weeks, which turns into a month. Other habits are then formed. And then, the thought of coming back brings feelings of embarrassment because people will ask where they've been.

“But encouraging one another.” Even if we attend services, if we fail to encourage others we have not obeyed this verse to the full extent. To say it another way: *It is impossible to encourage others if you are not engaged with others.* The word ***“encouraging”*** means, *“to call to one's side, to comfort, to console and to strengthen.”* And it's in the present tense, meaning it should be a continuous habit.

Would you notice how verse 25 ends? We're to have urgency in our encouraging because the return of Christ is getting closer: "...**And all the more as you see the Day approaching.**" We need to encourage each other more because the time is short.

I believe it will become harder and harder for us to live holy lives and it will become more and more important for Christians to do life in community with other Christ-followers. I'm already seeing two movements take place. I see some Christians becoming even more sold out to Christ and I see others who have unplugged and now they're unraveling. Christ could return tomorrow, so let's make the most of today. Let's live with urgency, passion and commitment.

Let's remember when we gather, it's not primarily for ourselves. We gather with God's people to meet with God. We gather for praising, we gather for preaching and we gather for praying.

One more point related to *Gathering*. According to research, the number one reason church attendance is declining in America is that believers are coming less frequently. Many Christians do not think gathering with God's people is all that important. Recently, Trevin Wax wrote an article entitled: "*Are You A Part-Time Church Goer? You May Be Surprised.*" If you miss one service a month that means you're only gathering 40 times a year with God's people. If you miss twice a month, you're only here 26 times a year for a 75-minute service. I'm not very good at math but I did get my calculator out recently. To put that in perspective, that's only 32 hours gathering with God's people out of the 8,765 hours you've been given each year!

How are you doing at gathering with God's people? We have three service options on purpose—one on Saturday nights and two on Sunday mornings. We also gather on Sunday nights during the school year.

Our aim is for everyone at Edgewood to gather with God's people on a regular basis.

Grow

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him, who is the head, into Christ."

Ephesians 4:15



The word **“grow”** means to increase or enlarge. I like what Rick Howerton says: *“The role of a pastor is not to grow a big church. The pastor’s role is to grow mature disciples who make disciples.”*

Do you know it’s normal for a Christian to grow? Christians are supposed to change. Transformation should be typical. Some of us have settled for a soft spirituality, content to soak up more information while avoiding transformation.

Kyle Idleman, in his book, *“Not a Fan,”* makes the point that there is a distinction between fans of Jesus and followers of Jesus: *“Many of our churches in America have gone from being sanctuaries to becoming stadiums. And every week all the fans come to the stadium where they cheer for Jesus but have no interest in truly following Him. The biggest threat to the church today are fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them.”*

2 Peter 3:18: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Growing in Christ is to be a

lifelong quest. Even after Paul had been a Christian for many years, he said he had not yet arrived, but he pressed on toward the goal of maturity in Christ (see Philippians 3:12-14).

We're to "***grow up in every way...***" It's imperative that each of us spends time daily with the Lord individually for prayer and Bible reading. We must also gather with God's people in larger settings for weekly worship. But if that's all we're doing, we're missing out on a key growth component because *growth happens best in groups*.

I'd love to see everyone at Edgewood plug into some kind of group. It could be a Life Group, a Sunday morning ABF class, a men's or women's Bible study, "Entrusted with a Child's Heart" for moms, Celebrate Recovery 12-step group, Single and Parenting group, DivorceCare, GriefShare, or Financial Peace University. Could I encourage you to find a group to join? Why? Because we believe that *growth happens best in groups*. Our aim is for everyone at Edgewood to plug into a group.

Interestingly, Ephesians 4:16 says when we grow individually, the church body ends up growing: "***so that it builds itself up in love.***"

Give

"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord."

2 Corinthians 8:3



In his excellent book called, *"I'm a Church Member,"* Thom Ranier says that many Christians are all about getting, not giving: *"We join our churches expecting others to serve us, to feed us, to care for us...it's time to give instead of being entitled."* I like how he boils membership down to one short sentence: *"Give abundantly and serve without hesitation."*

Giving involves at least three areas—our treasures, our time and our talents.

I recognize many don't like to hear about giving but it's important to remember that giving is a part of discipleship. George Barna has discovered that 17% of Christians say they tithe but only 3% actually do so. Paul gave props to the church at Corinth for how they gave, even though they didn't have all that much to give.

- They gave *what* they could – ***"They gave according to their means..."***
- They gave *more* than they could – ***"Beyond their means..."***
- They gave *because* they could – ***"Of their own accord."***

1 Chronicles 16:29 links giving to our worship: **“Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!”** And we know from 2 Corinthians 9:7 that God loves a cheerful giver.

Ultimately, when we give, we’re saying we trust God to take care of our needs. When Beth and I give 10%, we’re trusting God to enable us to live on 90%. We also give to other missionaries and ministries but we consider that giving over and above what we tithe. Our tithe goes gladly and joyfully to the ministry of Edgewood.

The key in the area of giving is to see ourselves as stewards of what God has given to us. That means I’m responsible and accountable for how I manage the resources I’ve been entrusted with. That includes the dollars, days, and the deposit of spiritual gifts He’s given to me.

I like the next two verses in 2 Corinthians 8. Note how eager these believers were to give: **“Begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.”** How could they do this? It’s because they were surrendered to the Savior. Look at verse 5: **“And this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”** When we give ourselves first to the Lord we’ll joyfully give back to Him what He has given to us.

Jesus said: **“It is more blessed to give than to receive”** (Acts 20:35). How are you doing at giving what has been given to you?

Our aim is for each member to give of their time, talents and treasures.

Go

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew 28:19-20



This fourth value of “go” can turn to “no go” perhaps more quickly than the other three. It’s easy to drift from an external to an internal focus as a church. God wants us to go with the gospel but first we have to get out of our holy huddles and Christian cocoons.

In Acts 2:47, we see how the early church was energized to be involved in evangelism: “**...enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**” Here are three quick thoughts:

- When we gather, grow, give and go; God goes to work and gets all the glory.
- How people respond to the gospel is **God’s** responsibility. Remember this truth: *The Lord is the one who saves people.* It’s God who brings people to Himself.
- How I reflect God is **my** responsibility. I’m struck by the fact that my responsibility is to become completely committed and totally sold-out to Christ. These Christians enjoyed the “favor” of all the people. That reminds me of what was said about Jesus in Luke 2:52: “**And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, in favor**

with God and men.” Jesus was attractive to people! They wanted to be around Him.

That leads to a question: *“Do lost people like to be around me? Do I attract people because I’m gracious or do I repel them because I’m judgmental?”* I’m convinced of this: As we live out our 4Gs God **will** bring people to Himself. The order here is significant. The people **enjoyed favor** and then the Lord **brought people to faith**. The linkage here is love. If people see you love them, they will want to learn more about the God who loves them.

We could say it like this:

- They witnessed well – ***“...having favor with all the people...”***
- They watched God do His work – ***“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”***

Do you know that God has put you in your neighborhood on purpose? Here are some ways to help you go with the gospel:

- Begin praying, “God, how can I show love to my neighbors?”
- Introduce yourself to a neighbor you haven’t met yet
- Take a plate of cookies to a neighbor
- Offer to share tools or lawn equipment
- Ask a neighbor for home improvement advice
- Schedule a time to have a neighbor over for a meal
- Hang out in front of your house or apartment
- Offer to help a neighbor in need
- Follow-up when you hear about a need
- Ask a neighbor, “How can I pray for you?”
- Plan a neighborhood block party

I was challenged recently by something David Platt wrote: *“Every saved person this side of heaven owes the gospel to*

every lost person this side of hell.” Look for natural opportunities to tell *your* story and *His* story. Keep gospel pamphlets in your wallet or purse. We have free copies of *Soul Satisfaction* on the Resource Table with our service times and contact information printed on the back.

Five years ago *Christianity Today* asked Billy Graham this question: “What are the most important issues facing evangelicals today?” Here’s part of his answer: “*Will we really reach our world for Christ? Or will we turn increasingly inward, caught up in our own internal affairs or controversies, simply becoming more and more comfortable with the status quo? Will we become inner-directed or outer-directed? The central issues of our time aren’t economic or political or social, important as these are. The central issues of our time are moral and spiritual in nature, and our calling is to declare Christ’s forgiveness and hope and transforming power to a world that does not know Him or follow Him. May we never forget this.*”

Members on Mission

So, here's the deal. If we're not devoted to our mission, we'll drift from the mission. We could say it like this: *The depth of our devotion will determine our impact.* I'm challenged by how King Josiah responded when he rediscovered the Scriptures. The first thing he did according to 2 Kings 22:11 was to **“tear his clothes,”** which was a sign of grief and repentance.

Later, he publicly committed himself to the covenant and led the people in a covenant renewal ceremony in 2 Kings 23:2-3: **“...And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.”**

The NASB says, **“They entered into the covenant.”** The KJV says, **“They stood to the covenant.”** The NLT puts it like this: **“All the people pledged themselves to the covenant.”** The Message paraphrases it this way: **“The people stood in affirmation; their commitment was unanimous.”**

Recently I shared a very interesting article that led to some great discussion during our staff team time called, “Is Your Church a Cruise Ship or Aircraft Carrier?” Here are a few excerpts.

People who attend “cruise ship churches,” much like cruise ship passengers, often come to be entertained and catered to by the staff. Very little is expected of these church attendees. In fact, they tend to rate the quality of their

experience—the music, the sermon and the way it made them feel—much like cruise ship passengers rate their satisfaction with various aspects of their trip.

Cruise ship churches tend to be internally focused on the needs of their regularly attending members. The main goal in these churches, as on a cruise ship, is to keep the “customer” happy and the complaints to a minimum. Leaders in a cruise ship church focus on the existing members rather than pursuing those far from God or encouraging others to do so. Very little of a church’s calendar, training or communication is spent on activities to reach the lost or help those in need outside the church.

There are, however, churches that are more like aircraft carriers. These churches are designed to empower all members to find their God-given purpose in life, to equip them and to send them on missions into the world to reach and serve those who don’t know Jesus, much like the crew of an aircraft carrier is all about launching military planes and equipping them well to carry out successful missions.

Did you know an aircraft carrier is the same size as many cruise ships, housing thousands of people? But what distinguishes an aircraft carrier ship isn’t its size; it’s the efficiency on the flight deck. The crew of an aircraft carrier can launch a plane every 25 seconds—all in a fraction of the space of a typical landing strip. The mission pervades every aspect of the ship. From the pilot to the person who restocks the ship’s vending machines, everyone on a carrier knows his or her particular role and how it supports the mission—to equip, prepare, launch and receive aircraft back from their crucial assignments.

An “aircraft carrier church” has a clear mission that stems from the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Everyone in the church knows why their church exists and plays a role in the mission.

I am so glad Edgewood is an “aircraft carrier church”! Instead of meandering, members are living on mission! Instead of just living for pleasure people are focused on their God-given purpose. Instead of just cruising through life, Christians are committed to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

Are you willing to pledge yourself to live on mission on the U.S.S. Edgewood? It may help to personalize these statements:

- I will gather with God’s people
- I will grow in a group
- I will give what I’ve been given
- I will go with the gospel

Is there one of these 4G’s you need some particular help in? Do you need to step it up in your gathering? How about in your growing? Do you need to raise your level of giving? Do you want to do a better job of going?

Are you ready to make a commitment to live out all 4G’s? If so, welcome aboard!

Join us as we live on mission for the glory of God and for the good of people.



www.edgewoodbaptist.net