

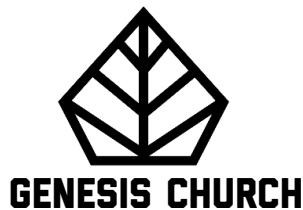


GENESIS CHURCH

NEW LIFE STARTS HERE



THE CULTURE OF GENESIS



God's vision for us is...
To be a Spirit-led community from here to there.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

God's mission for us is...
To cast nets and feed sheep.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

"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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

God's values for us are...
Love, Humility, and Unity.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:7-10)

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:3-5)

"I therefore urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:1-6)

THE JOURNEY BEFORE US

Life is a journey that is not meant to be traveled alone. Each journey has a starting point and a destination. The questions we must ask is who are we journeying with and where are we going? God's **vision** for us at Genesis Church is **to be a Spirit-led community from here to there** (Acts 1:8). Our desire is to be a people who walk together on the journey of life towards our destination of bringing God great glory. We strive to do so by following Jesus, the One who blazed the trail before us and invites us to join Him on His journey to extend His love and good news to the whole world (Hebrews 12:1-2)!

This journey isn't possible unless you and I live out all that God has in store for us by being Spirit-led followers of Jesus from here to there, joining Him and others on the journey to bring Him great glory. *What does it look like for a local church to be a Spirit-led community that is made up of Spirit-led followers of Jesus?* This is one of the key questions this booklet aims to answer. We are excited to see all that God has in store for you as we together partner with Him in His **mission to cast nets and feed sheep**, by loving Him and others, and by making disciples of all nations (Luke 10:27; Matthew 28:18-20).

OUR BULLSEYE AND FOUNDATION

Our aim and bullseye as a church, and as individual Jesus followers, is to bring great glory to God. When we say "God" we're referring to the triune God of the all things, who is three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one and who has chosen to reveal Himself to us through His word, the Bible. Our desire at Genesis Church is to ensure that everything we do, say, think, and believe is based upon the only sure foundation, God Himself.

Fortunately, many churches have this same aim and same foundation. The question becomes, *how does a local church actually hit the bullseye of bringing God great glory?* This is another key question this booklet begins to help you answer. This question has driven us to prayerfully and carefully examine the Bible to see how God desires His people to glorify Him.

HITTING THE BULLSEYE: THE CULTURE OF GENESIS

If our foundation at Genesis Church is God and His revealed word, the Bible, and our bullseye is His glory, then we must explore how we will practically put our faith into action in order to hit the bullseye. This has motivated us to develop what we call "**The Culture of Genesis**". This is our practical theology that helps us answer the question, *"how do we as a local church, and as individual Jesus followers, actually hit the bullseye of greatly glorifying God?"* If God is our "who", the Bible is our "what", and God's glory is our "why", the Culture of Genesis is our "how".

The Culture of Genesis is comprised of our vision, mission, values, and doctrine. Our **vision** is to be a Spirit-led community from here to there (Acts 1:8). Our **mission** is to cast nets and feed sheep (Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 10:27). Our **values** are love, humility, and unity. Our **doctrine** is based upon all that God has revealed in the Bible

OUR BULLSEYE:
GOD'S GLORY



FOUNDATION:
GOD + THE BIBLE

and is found in our Doctrinal Statement. The rest of this booklet seeks to articulate our **culture** so that together we might bring God great glory as a church and as individual Jesus followers.

CULTURE: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

What is “culture”? The dictionary defines culture as “the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group.”¹ One Christian theologian has provided an even simpler definition, stating, “*Culture is religion externalized.*”² This definition is insightful because it helps us understand that culture is a result of our individual and collective faith put into action. Our hope and prayer is that the culture at Genesis Church is synonymous with the culture of Jesus.

The reality is that the larger a church becomes, the less her people have in common. This is why we are intentional about the culture that develops here at Genesis Church. In order for a large community of people to move forward on their journey together with God, it is essential that they have some key things in common. When every follower of Jesus is walking in love and humility it enables us as a church to walk in unity. This unity unleashes the blessing of God through the power of His Holy Spirit, enabling us to individually and collectively bring great glory to God!

The body of Christ is made up of various parts that are to work together in unity to build up the body and exalt the Head, Jesus (1 Corinthians 12). *This means that you play a vital role in cultivating and contributing to the type of culture that Jesus desires for your life and His Church!* Don’t underestimate the reality that you are an active player in shaping the culture, while simultaneously allowing the culture of Jesus to shape you.

THE KEY INGREDIENTS TO CULTURE

How do you know if something tastes good? You could take someone else’s word for it or you could taste and see for yourself! The adage, “the proof is in the pudding” is applicable to knowing if we are truly cultivating the type of culture that honors the Lord here at Genesis Church. The Bible is our foundation for determining the key ingredients that are necessary for cultivating God’s desired culture. The Bible is also the measuring stick that we use to evaluate our experience in order to ensure that we’re actually advancing the culture of Jesus at Genesis Church.

You could say that we’re all part of a great kitchen staff (individual Christians who are collectively the body of Jesus) who are in the process of making a delicious pudding (our culture) from a recipe created by the world’s best chef (God). At the same time, we’re a team of quality control technicians who are continuously tasting and evaluating the pudding (our culture) in order to ensure it meets the chef’s (God) standards. So, what are the key ingredients that are required for us to embrace, experience, and participate in God’s desired culture for us? The Bible reveals three key ingredients that serve to unleash the blessing of God, enabling us to hit our bullseye of bringing God great glory! *The three ingredients are love, humility, and unity.* Let’s explore each of these one by one.

¹ Dictionary.com

² This is paraphrased quote from Henry Van Til

THE FIRST INGREDIENT: LOVE

God is love and the true measure of a follower of Jesus is found in his or her love for God and others (Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:27; 1 John 4:7-10). Jesus told us that our love for one another would be what sets us apart as His followers (John 13:35). John reminds us that our love for God and others is only possible because God initiated our relationship with Him through the greatest act of love ever accomplished in history – the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 John 4:9-11). It is only through this act of self-sacrificing love that we are able to trust in Jesus by grace, God’s undeserved favor, through faith and become children of God who have been made new in Him (John 1:12-13; Romans 8:15-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10).

As if this wasn’t enough, God has sealed every one of His children with His Holy Spirit, empowering them to live in loving obedience to Him, growing in increasing dependency upon Him, and loving Him and others with the same self-sacrificing love of Jesus (John 14:15-26; Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:13). *This means that you can love others and walk in trust and obedience to God because He has given you His Holy Spirit!* The Spirit enables us to learn how to daily surrender ourselves to God so that we might bring Him great glory as we join Him on His mission to extend His love to the world. The Holy Spirit also empowers you and me to be people characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-25). The first ingredient, love, is the bedrock that leads to the second ingredient, humility.



THE SECOND INGREDIENT: HUMILITY

Humility is walking in dependence upon God, following Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that you utilize everything God has given you to bring Him great glory. A life of humility is marked by Spirit-filled service to others (Mark 10:45) that is motivated by the love of Jesus (1 Corinthians 13:13). True humility is found in doing what is right in God’s eyes, being a person marked by mercy, and living in continuous dependence upon God (Micah 6:8). Jesus reminds us that He is the *Living Water* of whom we are to spiritually drink (John 4:13-14), that He is the *Bread of Life* of whom we are to spiritually eat (John 6:35, 51), and He is the *Vine* in whom we are to daily live and dwell (John 15:1-5). Jesus invites you and me to depend on Him through the power of His Spirit by living a life of humility that is energized and nourished by Him.



Humility is so important to God that three different biblical authors remind us of this same truth: *God opposes those who walk in pride, but He gives grace to those who walk in humility* (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; and 1 Peter 5:5). These passages teach us that God will oppose, literally “wage war”, on those who live a lifestyle marked by pride and arrogance. It is imperative to recognize that these verses are written to God’s own people! The reality is that we, God’s own children, can be living in a manner that is contrary to His way, will, and desire. According to God, He will wage war on us out of His love for us until we submit ourselves to Him, draw near to Him, turn from our

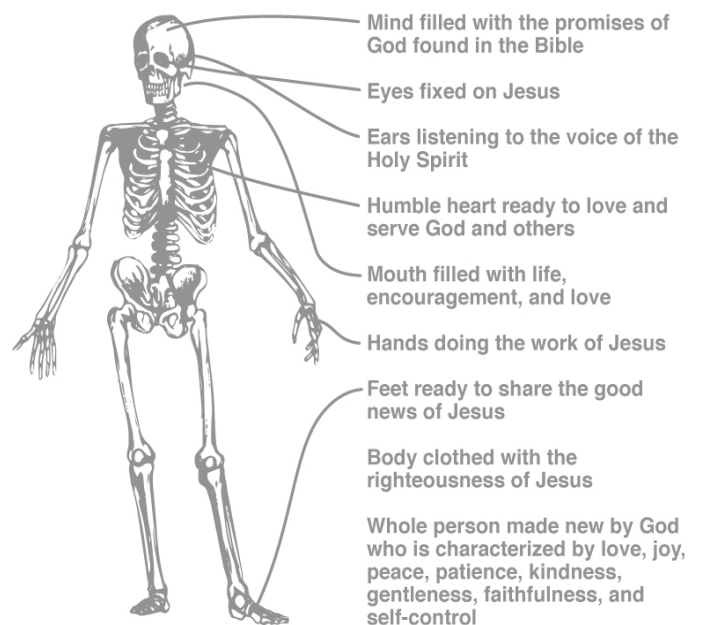
prideful ways, and humble ourselves before Him (James 4:7-10). Praise God for His mercy and forgiveness that is available to us when we turn from our sin (1 John 1:9), but let's never forget that we are on shaky and unblessed ground when we walk in a manner of pride and arrogance (Matthew 7:24-27).

Out of all the images of humility found in the Bible, there is none greater than that of Jesus who, "being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:6-11).

This image of love, faithfulness, mercy, and humility ought to move us at the core of our beings! That King Jesus would leave His heavenly throne to condescend all the way down to earth to make a way for us to enter into His kingdom, to be called children of God, and to have the privilege of joining Him on His mission of extending His love to others is unfathomable! Earlier in this same passage, God invites us to "complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you not look only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:2-5). **These verses make it abundantly clear that personal humility is the key that unlocks collective unity within a local body of Jesus followers.** Before we examine our third ingredient let's briefly pause to prayerfully consider the essential traits of loving and humble followers of Jesus so we may journey together in unity.

THE ANATOMY OF A SPIRIT-LED FOLLOWER OF JESUS

This diagram includes the character traits that God desires each one of us to cultivate in our own lives so that we can bring Him great glory individually and collectively. It's important to acknowledge that you and I are on a *journey*, one that won't conclude until we stand before God face to face in eternity (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 3:2). While we will never fully live out the following character traits on this side of eternity, we make it our aim to embrace them as we grow in surrender to the power and work of the Spirit of God in our lives. It is through His power at work within us that we are able to live out God's call on our lives, to walk in love and humility so that we as a local church may walk together in unity. *With this in mind, here are the specific, essential traits that God desires for us as we follow Him.*



THE THIRD INGREDIENT: UNITY

Collective unity is experienced in the body of Christ when each individual believer is walking in love and humility. In John 17 Jesus prays for the unity of His followers. His prayer teaches us the vital relationship between unity and success in ministry. Jesus prayed, “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, *that they may be one, even as we are one*” (John 17:11). This prayer for unity is simple, practical, and powerful. Here, Jesus prays that His followers would have the same unity of vision, mission, purpose, and passion that He shares with the Father. It is important to remember that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are never at odds with one another.

Jesus not only prayed for believers in His day but for every believer, thereafter, including you and me. *He prayed that we might walk together in unity so that the world may believe in Him* (John 17:21,23). Did you catch that? Jesus connects biblical unity to effective evangelism and people understanding the love of God. He reminds us, “Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). God has called us to intentionally and eagerly “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) that He has gifted to us through His life, death, and resurrection. It is up to you and me to walk in love and humility in order to walk together in unity so that the world may come to know Jesus.



LOVE, HUMILITY, UNITY, AND GOD’S BLESSING

Psalm 133 reads, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when God’s people dwell in *unity!* It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded *the blessing*, life forevermore.” **This passage reveals how God greatly blesses His people when they walk in love, humility, and unity.**



BLESSING

*This passage reveals how unity is an essential prerequisite for divine blessing in the same way the sacred anointing oil was used for the Old Testament priesthood. Prior to serving, every priest had to be anointed with the sacred anointing oil (Exodus 29:7-9 and 30:22-38). Second, this passage reveals how unity is an essential agent of divine transformation. It transforms a life and ministry the same way that water completely transforms dry, infertile landscapes. In Psalm 133, God compares Mt. Zion with Mt. Hermon (pictured on the front of this booklet). Mt. Zion is dusty, infertile and barren because it does not have the irrigation of Mt. Hermon, made possible by the dew. With water, however, Mt. Zion would be transformed, becoming lush and productive. **God greatly blesses when we journey together in love, humility, and unity. This enables us to hit our bullseye of bringing Him great glory by being a Spirit-led community who casts nets and feeds sheep!***

A SNAPSHOT OF THE CULTURE OF JESUS

Acts 2:42-47 reads, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Notice how the early Church is described. **It is a community of people who find their common identity in Jesus, are filled with His Spirit, motivated by His love, and display their love for Him through their love for other believers and for those who were not yet followers of Christ.** This passage is an embodied fulfillment of Jesus’s prayer for unity back in John 17! This type of culture wasn’t only intended for the early Church but was intended to be experienced in every local church across the globe! This is the culture that we are prayerfully seeking to cultivate at Genesis Church.

This culture is only possible when you and I set aside all other goals in order to take up the one goal of bringing God great glory. According to the Bible, God has given us everything that we individually and collectively need to live lives of godliness (2 Peter 1:3-4). He has brought us into His kingdom and His family through His Son, Jesus (Colossians 1:13; 1 John 3:1-2), He has sealed us with His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), and He has given us His revealed word, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). If God has given us all we need then *it’s up to you and me to surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us both individually and collectively (1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19) so that we might experience, cultivate, and participate in the culture of Jesus right here right now!*

Would you partner with us as we seek to partner with God by drawing near to Him (James 4:8), asking Him to move mightily (Matthew 7:7-11), and pleading with Him to accomplish His will and bring about His kingdom right here in York, Pennsylvania as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:9-10)? Imagine what it would be like to experience Acts 2:42-47 right here and now! **We pray that dream would become a reality at Genesis Church as we journey together in love, humility, and unity that unleashes the blessing of God so that we might bring Him great glory!**

OUR JOURNEY TO BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED COMMUNITY

