

# WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF....

A lot of what keeps us going at Heart of the City is being able to dream about what things could be like in the City Wide Church as compared to what things are currently like.

As we have said so many times, we're not trying to put on concerts or even just worship celebrations, but we're trying to provide a way for Christians to come together on a regular basis across racial and denominational lines. We're trying to change the habits of the average Christian. We're trying to help Christians see themselves, not only in theology, but also in practice, as being a part of the One Church of Jesus Christ and as His intimately connected Body.

But it's clear that we're a long way from reaching that goal. Most of the Christian congregations in the Twin Cities are still mostly racially segregated, independent from one another and often competitive, at incredibly different extremes economically, and denominationally and doctrinally divided.

Current realities can be very discouraging, but vision is what drives us on. So to keep our eyes on the vision, we come back to the Word of God and God's vision for the Church and we dream of what such unity would look like. Since we've never seen such unity in practice it's hard to know what it would really be like, but dream with me a minute....

## *If Christians walked in the Spirit and walked in unity:*

- **Pastors would feel no sense of competition with other pastors.**
- **Concerns about "Sheep stealing" wouldn't exist because we'd see ourselves as part of one flock under one Chief Shepherd.**

*Rom.12:10* **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.**

*JAS. 3:14* **But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. <sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.**

- **We would never think about the Church in terms of just our congregation.**
- **Our prayers for the Church would always include other congregations.**
- **Our hearts would beat for the building of the Kingdom—not just our congregation or denomination.**

*RO 12:3* **For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. <sup>4</sup> Just as each of us has one body with many**

members, and these members do not all have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and **each member belongs to all the others.**

- **Ethnocentrism and racism would not exist in the Church, and racism and injustice in society would be confronted by Christians of all races.**
- **Bitterness and division would be replaced by forgiveness and love.**
- **The cultural richness of the Church would be greater than anything the world has seen as Christians embrace their identity in Christ more than their racial identity.**
- **Our congregations would not be racially divided.**

<sup>11</sup> *Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

*COL 3:12* Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.<sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.<sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>16</sup> *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but **be willing to associate with people of low position.** Do not be conceited.*

*IJN 4:19* We love because he first loved us.<sup>20</sup> **If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar.** For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.<sup>21</sup> And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- **Some congregations wouldn't have huge buildings and abundant resources while others have run down buildings with very few resources. Resources would be shared and a vision of the whole would come ahead of the vision of the individual congregation.**
- **Citywide Church "barn raisings" would take place regularly as congregations would help other congregations in getting their buildings built or remodeled. Individual congregations would regularly take up offerings to help the building programs, staffing and other needs of other congregations.**
- **Congregations would freely send forth congregants to other congregations to help lead, teach or offer their gifts of service.**
- **No congregation would be lacking and no congregation would have too much.**
- **The needs of the poor would be central to every church.**

*2CO 8:1* And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.<sup>2</sup> **Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.**<sup>3</sup> **For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.** Entirely on their own,<sup>4</sup> they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.<sup>5</sup> And they did not

do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. <sup>6</sup> So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. <sup>7</sup> But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--**see that you also excel in this grace of giving.**

<sup>2CO 8:13</sup> Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. <sup>14</sup> At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, <sup>15</sup> as it is written: "**He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.**"

- **Pastors would regularly pray with, serve, and get to know other pastors.**
- **Christians would gather with other Christians outside of their race, denomination, congregation and socio-economic group to pray, worship and fellowship.**

<sup>1CO 12:21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> **If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.**

- **The young and the old would embrace one another and value one another.**
- **There would be no "wars" over worship styles.**
- **Christians of different races and ages would learn to appreciate and value one another's different styles.**

<sup>1TI 2:8</sup> I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

<sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

<sup>1PE 5:1</sup> To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup> not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

*1PE 5:5* Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

*"God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble."*

- **Doctrinal issues could be discussed and sorted out in loving, relational dialogue.**
- **God would bring to us a supernatural agreement about issues of doctrine and denominations would no longer divide us.**
- **There would be a spiritual maturity in the Church like we've never seen.**

*2TI 2:14* Keep reminding them of these things. **Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.** <sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

*1CO 1:10* I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. <sup>11</sup> My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

*1CO 3:1* **Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ.** <sup>2</sup> I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. <sup>3</sup> You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? <sup>4</sup> **For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?**

*1CO 3:5* What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. <sup>6</sup> I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. <sup>8</sup> The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

- **Non-Christians would look at the Church and marvel and believe that Jesus truly was sent from the Father.**
- **There would be supportive, collaborative efforts to evangelize the lost in the city.**
- **Countless unbelievers would be drawn to Christ through the Church.**
- **The Church would be seen and would function in every business where there are Christians employed there.**

*JN 17:20* "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I

*am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.<sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:<sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity **to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.***

*MT. 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*

- **THE CHURCH WOULD BE A FORCE FOR GOOD IN A WAY UNSEEN SINCE THE DAYS OF THE EARLY CHURCH!**
- **THE CITY WOULD BE TRANSFORMED!!**

What a dream! And yet how utterly impossible to attain—except for God! All of our measly efforts cannot change such entrenched issues. We would only be foolish and arrogant to even attempt to see such change if it weren't for the scriptures themselves calling us to this radical vision. I think we can only have two responses to this vision: *to ignore the scriptures and look cynically upon such ideals*, or *to pursue such a radical transformation through our choices and prayers that we won'te rest until we see it come to be*. It's God's vision—not ours. And we personally are far from attaining such a standard. But we must embrace His values and His heart and seek to understand and do what our part is to rebuild the walls that are so broken down.

Will you join us in this dream? Will you pick up the burden of the divided Church in prayer and begin to cry out to God for real transformation, healing and change? Will you join us monthly in bringing together the Body of Christ? We hope so. ***Jesus is still the Miracle Maker and He can do a miracle in the Church of the Twin Cities!***