



## Our Life Group

*Where is God Taking Us? Week 6*

October 14, 2018

### LEARNING GOALS

- Understand whom God calls to do His work.
- Illustrate the value of being aligned with the Lord's direction for our church.

### OUTLINE

1. **REVIEW - "WHERE IS GOD TAKING US?" SERIES**
2. **OUR LIFE GROUP**
  - I. Who does God use?
  - II. Why should every Life Group align with the church?
  - III. How well are we aligned and how can we avoid mission drift?

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The goal of our current series, "Where is God Taking Us?", is to align our Life Group with the Lord's direction for our church. We are engaging all elements of the Vision Frame. *(Teacher, point to the **Vision Frame storyboard.**)*

Last week we looked at our Vision, which defines WHERE God is taking us. *(Teacher, point to the Vision statement on the far right of the storyboard and ask for someone in class to quote the Vision statement...to be a catalyst for spiritual awakening in Memphis and beyond!)*

Over the last five Sundays we have talked about **what** we are doing, **why** we do what we do, **how** we get involved, **when** we are on target, and **where** God is taking us.

Today we turn to our focus to: **who!** **Who** defines the group of people who mobilize our Vision and Mission.

*(Teacher - **Pray** - Thank the Lord for His Presence in your Life Group and for the clear direction He has given our church. Ask God for Spirit-guided teaching and for receptive ears willing to obey the teaching of God's Word.)*

## **Who Does God Use?**

Who does God use to do His work?

He uses His people!

Throughout the Bible God calls and sends people to participate in His work.

Can you name a person or group of people in the Bible that God used to do His work?

*(Teacher, answers will vary.)*

One of the greatest examples of God mobilizing a group of people to do His work is of the people of Israel. There are moments that the Israelites followed the vision and mission of the Lord, but there were times they lost sight of the vision.

Please turn in your Bible to Numbers 13.

In Numbers 13, Moses sent twelve spies to check out the promise land.

Let's read what happened. Someone please read Numbers 13:27-14:4.

Ten spies return discouraged by the difficulties that seemed to lie ahead. They lost track of the Vision and lacked the faith to take God at His word.

Their doubt resulted in a delay, and God redirected the Israelites. An entire generation was not allowed to enter the promise land. Instead, they wandered through the wilderness for forty years.

Under Joshua's leadership the Israelites held firm to the mission God had given them, and they entered the promise land by faith. They accomplished the work of the Lord and blessings followed.

In the New Testament the Lord called and sent disciples, apostles, and missionaries to forward His work.

*"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Matthew 16:18*

In this verse Jesus introduced His work of establishing the church, which began on the day of Pentecost. This church would not be a building but a body of believers.

The word “church”, the English translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, is used in the New Testament to describe a local congregation of *called-out Christians*. An example is found in 1 Corinthians 1:2: the “*church of God, which is at Corinth.*”

Ephesians 4:16 speaks to how individual believers work together in a church. “*From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*”

Bellevue is an *ekklesia*, a local congregation of called-out Christians. Not only are we called-out, we are also sent out and we know where God is taking us!

### **Why should every Life Group align with the church?**

How should a church the size of Bellevue organize to effectively fulfill the Mission and Vision God has given us?

For those currently serving in the Armed Forces, or those who have previously served: What does your branch of the military call the different sizes of groups of soldiers? (i.e. “platoons” or “battalions”) What is the purpose behind breaking larger groups into various smaller groups?

*(Teacher, answers will vary.)*

Basically, the military organizes large groups of soldiers into smaller troops to provide flexibility and to make movement easier while on mission. The United States Army, though comprised of individual soldiers, is assembled into platoons, squads, and fire teams. If a soldier doesn’t understand or carry out his individual role, the unit fails to accomplish the mission.

Bellevue is a large organization much like an army. We are an organized body of believers with a mission to fulfill.

*Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*

1 Corinthians 12:14-18

**Who** is the group of people at Bellevue prepared to mobilize our Vision and Mission? The answer is: us! We are organized into a Life Group! Bellevue deploys all Adult Life Groups as her mobilized platoons!

The purpose of a Life Group is to fulfill the Vision and Mission of our church as we meet together regularly to grow and serve.

Our focus today is to consider how our Life Group, one of Bellevue's many platoons, can better align with all the elements of our Vision Frame.

With proper alignment, we are better positioned to obey the commands of Jesus and operate in a way that is pleasing to Him. Jesus told us to Love God, Love People, Share Jesus, and Make Disciples and we want to do just that.

*(Teacher, if you sense a need to reiterate where our Mission comes from biblically, then have the two following texts read aloud.)*

Let's review the Scripture where these commands are found.

Turn to Matthew 22. Would someone please read Matthew 22:34-40?

*But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

Jesus identifies the two most important commands: Love God and Love People. Bellevue identified these two commands as most important to us as well.

The next two parts of the Mission comes from Matthew 28:18-20, commonly referred to as the Great Commission.

Turn to Matthew 28.

Would someone please read **Matthew 28:18-20**?

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Jesus not only calls us to share the gospel with the lost, but we are also called to Make Disciples. This is the third and fourth aspect of our Mission.

Our Mission provides biblical direction for our church.

### **How well is our Life Group aligned and how can we avoid mission drift?**

Today’s question for our Life Group: Is our Life Group aligned with our Vision Frame or have we drifted off course?”

Before we answer, let’s consider both scenarios.

What do you think it means for a Life Group to be aligned with the Vision and Mission of our church?

If a Life Group is **well aligned** with Bellevue’s Vision Frame, what do you think the Life Group would **know, be, and/or do**?

A Life Group in alignment could speak of our Mission by saying, “We **know** we are to Love God, Love People, Share Jesus, and Make Disciples. We strive to **be** a Great Commandment and Great Commission people. We **do** life in a way that exemplifies our desire to obey the Lord.”

Where do you see **our Life Group well aligned** with our Vision Frame? To ask it differently, what examples display how we Love God, Love People, Share Jesus and Make Disciples?

Thank you. Your responses are evidence of our obedience to Scripture.  
*(Teacher, the following two questions require looking ahead at your survey results.)*

Our class was invited to take a survey prior to this lesson series. The first survey question asked which component of our Vision Frame was thought about most often. According to our class responses, \_\_\_(highest ranked element from **Question 1**)\_\_\_ was the component thought of most often.

Why do you think our class thinks of \_\_\_\_ (Question 1 response above) \_\_\_\_ most often?

A second survey question asked, “If guests were to visit your Life Group, which of our Values would they most experience?” According to our class results, guests would most experience \_\_\_\_ (highest ranked Value from **Question 7**) \_\_\_\_.

What has helped \_\_\_\_ (Question 7 response above) \_\_\_\_ be the most experienced Value?

Thank you for helping us identify areas where we are doing a good job of alignment! Our desire, as a Life Group, is to follow the biblical direction of our church.

However, there is a phenomenon in life called “**mission drift.**” It is an irresistible force that pulls a person or group off of its intended course.

One example of mission drift is Harvard University. This iconic school was founded in 1636 to “prepare ministers of upright character.” Today, Harvard would struggle to provide evidence that reflects they are anywhere close to their original roots.

Mission drift doesn’t happen overnight. It happens one decision at a time. Even the smallest decisions, over time, will take a Life Group off track.

Pilots understand the big impact of small deviations. When a plane veers off course, the impact of the error grows over time and distance. For example, if a plane veers off course one degree, the plane will be one mile away from its intended destination after only sixty miles of flying. However, the distance would continue to expand until a course correction was made. The greater the deviation the more effort and time are required to return to the correct flight path.

Sometimes, similar to a pilot, Life Groups can glance up and realize they are off course.

If a Life Group experiences mission drift, these descriptors could be true of the class:

- Vision Frame language is rarely used.
- Life Group members do not consistently participate in Bellevue Loves Memphis.
- Lesson material is rarely driven by or attached to our Vision or Mission.
- Members and guests do not experience Intentional Hospitality.
- Few members Serve In with compassionate care.

*(Teacher, encourage honest answers to the following questions as some may think answers would reflect negatively on class leadership.)*

As you consider our Vision Frame, are there aspects where **we may have drifted?** Are there aspects of our Vision Frame that **we are not as passionate and effective about** as we were in the past?

What may be reasons why this drift occurred?

*(Teacher, thank responders for their answers and record areas that need addressing.)*

An additional question from the survey asked responders to complete our Vision statement that begins: Our Vision is to be a \_\_\_\_\_. (Question 9)

Vision statement:

**Our Vision is to be a catalyst for spiritual awakening in Memphis and beyond.**

*(Teacher, refer to the responses to Question 9 for details needed below.)*

Our survey results revealed \_\_ (number of correct responses) \_\_ correct responses. \_\_ (number of incorrect or incomplete) \_\_ responses were slightly off course.

What are some reasons we may not know our Vision statement?

*(Teacher, thank responders for their answers and record areas that need addressing.)*

Now that we see some areas where we have drifted, what do we do? Dr. Rogers said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results!" Simply stated, to improve our alignment we must change what we do.

Many organizations have altered their course to provide improved products or services. Consider that today's smart phone not only provides the convenience of unlimited information and free long distance calls, but users can also handle their banking needs while watching a football game at home. Consider the added peace air travelers have due to added TSA security procedures. And, for the first time, many adults can earn a college education online while working full time. Who can even imagine what lies ahead? (ex. Pizza delivery by drones, driverless cars)

As we consider our Life Group, what do you think **needs to change** to better align with the direction the Lord is taking our church? Let's consider the following "**know – be – do**" questions.

- What can we put into practice to better **know** our Vision Frame elements?  
*(Teacher, answers vary. Responses may include: use our Measures to focus on individual and class spiritually growth.)*
- What can we put into practice to better **be** the kind of people who live out our Vision Frame?  
*(Teacher, answers vary. Responses may include: display a greater love for the lost and our city.)*
- What can we put into practice to **do** what is encouraged through our Vision Frame?  
*(Teacher, answers will vary. Responses may include: adopting a new Serve Out initiative as a Life Group.)*

Those are good suggestions, thank you. I will pray about and consider these ideas!

In addition to implementing desired change, we also need to **safeguard ourselves from drifting off mission** in the future. Consider these **three ways** to safeguard ourselves from vision drift.

**First**, we can utilize the Vision Frame as our **decision making filter**. We can ask, "What element of the Vision Frame could we strengthen via our next teaching series or event?" Or, we could evaluate each new idea saying, "What aspect of the Vision Frame is supported by this new idea?"

By considering these filters, we build accountability into our group's DNA, ensuring the Vision and Mission of our church demonstrates what we want to know, be, and do as a Life Group! Let's use the Vision Frame as a decision-making filter for our decisions.

**Second**, we must **regularly talk about our Vision Frame** elements when we are together. In last week's lesson we learned a farmer's truth: crop irrigation is more effective with water that dripped rather than sprinkled or sprayed. In a similar way, we can stay on course by continually dripping, or using, Vision Frame language. For



This is \_\_\_\_\_ who serves as the **Greeter**. \_\_\_\_\_, tell us how you serve in our class and how it aligns with the Vision and Mission of our church.

This is \_\_\_\_\_ who serves as the **Small Group Leader(s)**. \_\_\_\_\_, tell us how you serve in our class and how it aligns with the Vision and Mission of our church.

This is \_\_\_\_\_ who serves as the **Prayer Leader**. \_\_\_\_\_, tell us how you serve in our class and how it aligns with the Vision and Mission of our church.

This is \_\_\_\_\_ who serves as the **Next Steps Connector**. \_\_\_\_\_, tell us how you serve in our class and how it aligns with the Vision and Mission of our church.

This is \_\_\_\_\_ who serves as the **Social/Recreation Leader**. \_\_\_\_\_, tell us how you serve in our class and how it aligns with the Vision and Mission of our church.

This is \_\_\_\_\_ who serves as the **Secretary**. \_\_\_\_\_, tell us how you serve in our class and how it aligns with the Vision and Mission of our church.

The Lord has truly blessed our Life Group with great leaders. Each of them helps us stay aligned with where the Lord is taking our church. I'll work closely with these leaders on the continued direction of our class using today's feedback and our Vision Frame.

I'm grateful we have great clarity on where God is taking us and the poster provides a visual reminder. The Vision Frame is not only a communication tool, but it is also an implementation strategy of how to keep our group in alignment.

To be a catalyst for spiritual awakening we must start here, in our Life Group, before we can expect an awakening in our church, city, and beyond!

***Let's keep our frame on*** as we seek to be a catalyst for spiritual awakening in Memphis and beyond!

*(Teacher, please close in prayer.)*

*Compiled by Tim Shelton and the Adult Ministry Staff*

