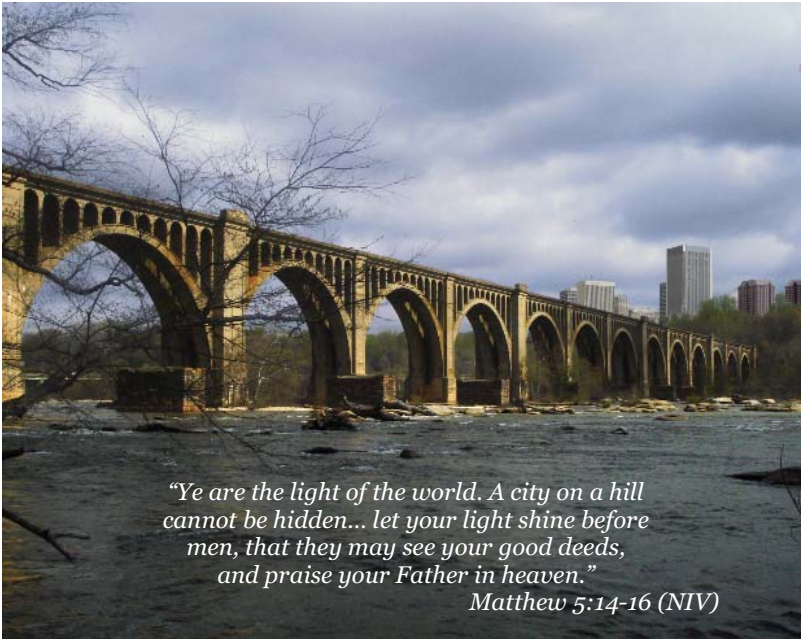


Connecting Churches to Bless Metropolitan Richmond

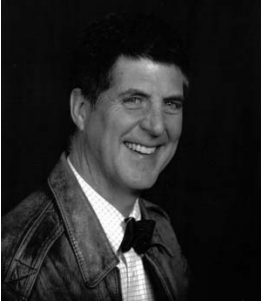


*“Ye are the light of the world. A city on a hill
cannot be hidden... let your light shine before
men, that they may see your good deeds,
and praise your Father in heaven.”*

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

James Anderson
Don Coleman
Richmond, Virginia

Forward



In Metropolitan Richmond the Christian community is comprised of many diverse groups and denominations. In the years ahead it is vital that the Christians churches in our region work together despite the differences between them. A greater degree of cooperation is critical if we are to influence this surrounding region with the love and goodness of Christ.

The relationship isolation locally between Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians and between Christians of different ethnicities undermines the authenticity of our commitment to the Gospel. Let us continue to pray and seek God's grace and mercy to heal the separations among us in a way that glorifies Him. This healing will enhance our effectiveness in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, in serving the poor and needy, and in articulating God's protective moral standards to Metropolitan Richmond.

Don and I have written this brief document for Christian leaders all across our region. For a collective regional vision to develop there must be authentic relationships among the local Christian leadership. As these relationships among our Christian leaders bridge denominational, racial and economic differences, congregations will follow. These relationships within this local Body of Christ will give witness to Christ's love and reality to our city and counties. Our region, Metropolitan Richmond, is desperate to see this reality.

For His Glory,
James C. Anderson



'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven'. This scripture has gripped my life for many years. So, when James asked me to co-author this document, I was humbled yet confident that our Father would give us the grace to write it. As a native Richmonder, my passion for "City Transformation" is deep and sincere.

I personally do not profess to be a writer but a "pray-er". Hours upon hours I have cried out to our Father God that 'his kingdom would come and his will would be done' in the city where he has called me to serve, Richmond, Virginia. My hope and prayer is, as you read these pages, your passion for a Christ-centered transformation of Metropolitan Richmond would be awakened like never before!

Agape,
Don Coleman

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There are no restrictions on reproducing this document. It is our hope that it will be used for the Glory of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Family Policy Council, Inc., 2911 Fincastle Ct., Midlothian, Va. 23113, published this document. We are very thankful to Rick Protz, Angel Trauterman, Chris Walke and Jason Walke for their assistance with editing.

Authors: James Anderson: james.anderson.md@gmail.com 804-276-9305 ex.221

Don Coleman: pastrdon@verizon.net 804-339-0745

Glossary of Terms

1. A **Christian** or a **believer** is an individual who has repented of their sin and has received forgiveness through the redeeming work at the cross by Jesus Christ (Romans 10: 9-10, Acts 4:10-12). A Christian or a believer refers to male or female but in this document the male gender will be inclusive of both.
2. A **church** is a congregation of believers and seekers. It is the same as parish or local assembly. This document will use the term **church** as inclusive of all three.
3. **Pastor, Reverend** and **Priest** are leaders of local churches. This document will use the term **Pastor** as inclusive of all three.
4. The **Body of Christ**, the **Christian community** and the **Church** refer to all believers collectively or to all local churches collectively in the same geographical area.
5. **City, locality, region** and **community** will be referred to synonymously. All refer to large and small groups of people living and interacting together in the same geographical location.
6. **Christian leadership** is defined by Christ-likeness and serving others. It includes those professionally trained and those in the lay community. It includes those in churches and those in para-church ministries.
7. **Love** is sacrificial, is serving, is caring, is initiatory and is generous. Love is accepting and valuing people. It is honoring others more highly than ourselves. Love involves trust but is not synonymous. Love does not involve expectations.
8. **Trust** is a relationship dynamic that involves vulnerability. Trust is the doorway into relationship intimacy – feeling connected, unique, special and

valued. Trust is confidence in someone's character, their judgment, their motives and their love. Trust involves expectations and hope.

9. **Authentic relationships** are relationships that involve both love and trust.
10. **Unity** is the fruit of the shared-vision to see Christ glorified in the context of authentic relationships and prayer. Unity is a description of the relationship that develops from the mutual pursuit to see God glorified in everything we do.
11. **God's kingdom** of righteousness, peace, and joy is where God's influence, his ways and his will reign. The Body of Christ is one vehicle that God uses to bring his kingdom to the earth: into the societies, the cultures, the communities and the cities of each nation.
12. **Transformation** occurs when the prayer of Jesus is being fulfilled: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven". Transformation is when Christ-centered change and Biblical truths permeate every area of a city: government, corporate, entertainment, education, home, health-care, legal, media and religious. Christians have responsibilities in this process but transformation is ultimately dependent on the sovereignty and grace of God.

Introduction

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile”. The revelation of Jesus Christ remains the most powerful dynamic an individual, a city or a nation can experience. The very “gates of hell shall not prevail against it”.¹

Over the last twenty-five years we have come to realize that the Christian community of Metropolitan Richmond has an amazing opportunity as well as a huge challenge before it. For over three centuries our region has only seen the Church as a divided community. The purpose of this document is to communicate a vision where one day the relationships between our local churches will be the basis for serving this region together. Our hope is that the grace of God will enable his Church, the Body of Christ, to fulfill its role as an earthly structure that can bring healing to individuals, families and Metropolitan Richmond. We have written this document so that the collective passion of this local Christian community would grow to see ourselves become a channel for Christ’s truth, influence and care to bless our region. With this deepening desire may we all echo Christ’s prayer “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”.²

God’s plan for Metropolitan Richmond could be viewed as a three-stage process. First, it starts when a person experiences a conversion that causes him to desire and grow in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Second, there must develop a Christ-centered unity among believers and their churches within Metropolitan Richmond. Third, as an outgrowth of this unity, the churches can then become a conduit for Christ’s love and care to bless our city and surrounding region.

It is our prayer that transformation will follow this blessing. There are no special formulas to bring this about. Transformation is totally dependent on the sovereignty and grace of God.

The deep conversion of individuals is a critical part of God's blessing to Metropolitan Richmond:

God uses the Christians who are committed to following Jesus and have experienced his grace. This happens through a surrender of oneself to know Jesus experientially, by believing his promises and following his ways.³ The evidence of an individual's conversion is observable by their love for Jesus Christ and his truth and by their love for other people.

The shared-vision to see Jesus Christ glorified creates unity:

Unity is a description of the relationship that develops from the mutual pursuit to see God glorified in everything we do. **Jesus Christ came to earth to glorify God.**⁴ The Holy Spirit's ministry is also to glorify God.⁵ Every Christian has been given this same purpose and shared-vision to glorify God with their life.⁶ A Christian will glorify God by finishing the specific works that God has planned for him.⁷ It is by intentionally embracing the vision to glorify God with other Christians that will create and sustain unity within our local Christian community. The unity that develops will cross denominational, ethnic, and economic boundaries. God is then able to use this unity for Christ's love and care to spread beyond our local Christian community into our city and surrounding communities.⁸

God uses the Church to bless and care for Metropolitan Richmond:

Like a pipeline that brings water from a reservoir to a needy city, a well-connected Christian community brings the love of Christ to a needy city.⁹ God cares about Metropolitan Richmond.¹⁰ The Church of Richmond is a

vehicle for an expression of his care and is intended to be “a light to the world”.¹¹ Our region will be blessed when God’s truth and grace flow through a unified Christian community to permeate every area of our region. It is our hope that a Christ-centered transformation of our city and counties will one day follow this blessing.¹²

1

God Relates to Individuals and Groups

The intention of this document will be on developing a vision of our local churches working together to bless and serve Metropolitan Richmond. It is necessary that this regional-vision or local-focus be understood in the context of other God-affirmed groups.

God has chosen to relate with the human race through a personal relationship with individuals.¹³ Jesus' sacrifice at the Cross is the doorway into this relationship with God as we receive his forgiveness.¹⁴ He loves and knows us individually as unique and valuable to him.¹⁵ This personal relationship is the centerpiece of a Christian's life and is the foundation for all other relationships.¹⁶ As a Christian grows in their knowledge of God and their love for him develops, the more they will grow in their love for other people and come to hate sin and selfishness. Through this growth a Christian is able to recognize that it is sin and selfishness that damage people and their relationships. God's purpose over our lifetime is to change us to be Christ-like, which means **we are to have the character of Christ and to love like Christ.**¹⁷ The vision to have Christ-like character and to love like Christ will act as a rudder to help guide us into the plan that God has purposed for each one of us. As we fulfill this plan, **we will glorify God with our life.**¹⁸

There are four distinct groups of people that have God-ordained purpose. How a person relates within each group is critical because growth through these relationships is necessary for a Christian to fulfill God's plan for their life. God's purpose in making a Christian Christ-like is accomplished by continuously enlarging his capacity to love, which occurs as he learns to relate appropriately within each group throughout his life.¹⁹

These four groups are:

1. Family²⁰
2. Church²¹
3. City²²
4. Nation²³

It is within the **family** that we learn about God's love and truth. It is there that our sense of belonging develops which causes us to value intimacy and commitment in our relationships.²⁴ We develop our capacity to trust within the family and it is there that we also learn to love, to forgive and to communicate. The family is where we gain an understanding that a higher priority should be placed on our relationships rather than on our individual happiness.²⁵ We learn that authority is to be protective and not restrictive.²⁶ These lessons will prepare us to have fulfilling lifetime relationships with God and with people.

Next, in the **church** we learn to love and worship God corporately.²⁷ We continue to learn about his mercy and holiness. A local church could be described as both a relational and emotional hospital as well as a discipleship-training center.²⁸ It is in the church that Christ enlarges our capacity to love and trust by teaching us to love and trust those in the Body of Christ, which is our new family into which we have been adopted.²⁹ The function of the local church is both critical and essential in God's plan for a Christian's life.

A Christian not only acquires the capacity to love other Christians in the church, but he discovers that God cares about those outside the church and his desire is for Christians to care also.³⁰ He has placed Christians in **cities** for the good of the city by being his ambassadors to draw others unto him.³¹ In the city, Christians have an opportunity to love those who are radically different and even learn to love those who hate them.³²

In addition to the impact of individual Christians on Metropolitan Richmond, God’s plan is that our local churches collectively would influence this region. **The potential of the collective influence of the local Christian churches on Metropolitan Richmond will be the focus of this document. By God’s grace, a well-connected local Christian community would become a channel of God’s blessing, love and truth to our region.**³³

God views each **nation** as unique and valuable. His command is “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”.³⁴ If a nation is ever to become a Christian nation, it will happen city by city, one city at a time. It is the local Christian community of each city that is to be a vehicle for Christ’s blessing to that city and its surrounding region.

Heaven itself will reflect God’s love for the people of all nations as Christians are gathered from every nation to worship God. In Revelations the scripture says, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no man could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. ...they fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!’”³⁵

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Identify which churches in our area that are working together and which ones that are isolated from each other. Consider the many ways church-to-church cooperation could bless our area.

The State of our Cities

In preceding generations, our culture was influenced by the moral boundaries of its Judeo-Christian foundation. The Judeo-Christian teachings are very clear on how we are to treat people and honor relationships. Any trend that shifts us away from these moral boundaries will eventually undermine our social wellbeing. As we study the different statistics that reflect social stability, it is clear that Metropolitan Richmond is in a precarious situation. This fragile condition mandates the involvement of its local Christian community.

As stated earlier, the purpose of this document is to bring focus on the potential that the local churches could have if they were working and serving together for Metropolitan Richmond. As we study the different statistics that are a reflection of social stability, it is clear that intervention is needed. The numerous issues that confront us include family dysfunction, racism, youth gangs, suicide, violence, adultery, abortion, pornography, greed, drug abuse and many others, all of which negatively affect the social environment in which we live. Three issues in particular, frequency of violent crime, percentage of those in poverty and a decline in educational performance, can be tracked as indicators of social stability. A very important association to note is that these three issues are directly connected to the rising percentage of children born out-of-wedlock.³⁶ If the percentage of out-of-wedlock childbirth continues to increase, it will become significantly detrimental to our collective future and the stability of our region.

The increase in the out-of-wedlock birth rate is the result of the significant change in the family unit over the last forty years. Nationwide, in the Caucasian population, the percentage of single parent families has increased from 8.9% in 1970 to 38.3% in 2004. In the African-American community, during the 70-year period from 1890 until 1960, two-parent households headed eighty

percent of families. From 1960 until today, that has decreased steadily to today's low of twenty-eight percent. In Richmond, Virginia, the total 2007 out-of-wedlock birth rate was reported at 63.5% of births.³⁷ The breakdown of the family unit and rising out-of-wedlock birth rate will have serious implications for our future.

One of the troubling statistics with a direct correlation to the out-of-wedlock birth rate is the increasing incidence of violent crime. This connection was noted in the 1995 Virginia General Assembly Report that stated the best predictor of violent crime in a city is the percentage of homes without a father.³⁸ Half of the fatherless homes in Virginia come from divorce and half from out-of-wedlock births. In 1995, Richmond and Petersburg were #1 and #2 in percentages of homes without a father. They were also #1 and #2 respectively in incidence of violent crime in the State of Virginia. Seventy percent of juveniles in state institutions grew up in fatherless homes.³⁹ The increasing prison population reflects the increasing incidence in violent crime. Between 1987 and 2007, the national prison population has nearly tripled.⁴⁰ In 2008, for the first time in history, more than one in every hundred adults in America is in jail or in prison.⁴¹

Over the past forty years America has experienced prolonged episodes of prosperity and peace, so what then is an explanation for the increase of these negative and painful trends? Many Christian leaders believe that the departure of our society from a Biblical foundation and personal faith is the root cause. In preceding generations, our culture was influenced by the moral boundaries of its Judeo-Christian heritage that gave us very clear guidelines as to how we are to treat people and honor relationships. Today, we can observe in our culture the movement away from many of these moral boundaries. This will eventually undermine our social wellbeing because social stability depends on much more than just economic stability. What it ultimately depends on is how people value each other and how they honor their relationship commitments. Let us look at four aspects of our culture that contribute to a devaluing of people and their relationships; and therefore negatively influence the social health of our cities:

- a. Family dysfunction and breakdown
- b. Cultural messages that change our priorities
- c. Many messages of the media and entertainment industries undermine personal accountability
- d. Negative examples of some public leaders

a. Family dysfunction and breakdown:

The family unit in our nation (that is basic to the stability of any society) has crumbled over the last forty years. Trends represented by the out-of-wedlock birth rate, the divorce rate and the rate of non-marital cohabitation have had a decidedly detrimental impact on the family unit and on societal stability. The connection between family stability and social stability exists because the social building blocks necessary for individuals to function properly in society (trust, love, forgiveness, communication, honesty and respect) are learned first in the family. Without this beginning structure we have no foundation for functioning in society.

If there is family dysfunction and breakdown, then often anger, distrust and selfishness replace these critical social building blocks. These negative dynamics all devalue relationships and people, both within and outside of the family and therefore negatively affect societal stability.

b. Cultural messages that change our priorities:

The Judeo-Christian foundation of our society in the preceding generations placed an emphasis on character development and understood the importance of relationships. Our culture today has devalued character development and relationship commitments and has made our abilities and activities of higher priority. Our culture resonates with the superficial theme that our self worth and importance are tied primarily to our wealth and performance rather than by our relationship and character development. Success today is defined by power, position, fame or wealth. Our desire to be successful has grown to the place that it has become the engine or

rudder of our decision-making process. We have chosen to trust in our abilities more than in our character. We now place a higher value on our intellect instead of our honesty or patience, on our beauty instead of our generosity and kindness, and on our athletic skills instead of our perseverance and courage. That which should be regarded as the most essential, now seems to have taken a back seat. Our culture has chosen to place higher priority on our activities, careers and social position rather than on our relationship commitments, and for this choice we suffer much heartache. There can be no doubt that our relationship commitments and how we value and treat one another should be considered as far more important than our activities and are critically needed for social stability.

c. Many messages of the media and entertainment industries undermine personal accountability:

The explosive growth of mass communications, especially television, movies and internet over the last 30 years has been unprecedented. These communications now have gained access to nearly every household across our Nation. The content and the messages of what we see and hear are increasingly lacking the moral boundaries of our Judeo-Christian foundation. With this widespread exposure comes an unhealthy potential to influence the culture by undermining personal accountability. This occurs by removing from poor moral decisions the predictable consequences that would ordinarily occur in real life. A case in point is in the entertainment industry that often portrays intimacy mainly by the physical-sexual relationship and most often outside the commitment of marriage. The real life consequences of sexual relationships outside the commitment of marriage are rarely portrayed. In truth, the consequences of non-marital sexual relationships are the cause of much breakdown and heartache. In many other areas the media and entertainment industries now fail to show the true consequences of self-centered decisions and therefore communicate an inaccurate representation of real life. A self-centered life style devalues others and weakens relationship commitments. By disconnecting the consequences from self-centered decisions and thus undermining personal accountability,

the mass communications industry has contributed to our current crisis of societal disorder and dysfunction.

d. Negative examples of some public leaders:

When public figures misuse their position of leadership there are often negative consequences. One consequence is the erosion of the people's confidence in their public figures and government institutions. Misuse of power causes people to distrust and become cynical towards important government institutions or systems that are needed for societal and city stability.

These are just a few examples of some of the dynamics that are creating a fragile situation in Metropolitan Richmond. The consequences of our society's departure from a Biblical foundation and personal faith are in evidence by the significant amount of heartache and suffering that has resulted.

The question then is, how can we reverse these trends and the heartache they create, not just for the individual, but also for society as a whole? We can agree that this is a monumental task that we have before us; therefore, the whole local Christian community must be involved if there is to be any turn-around. Our local churches must work together to bring Christ's holiness and love into our city and surrounding region. We need a focused strategy to bring our local churches into a closer working relationship in order to serve our region together. We all know and can observe the cruelty of evil as well as the healing potential in Christ. Therefore, we echo Jesus' prayer, 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'.⁴²

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Endeavor to develop an understanding of the issues that undermine societal stability in our area. Then you can be aware of the enormity of the pain and heartache associated with them. This will help us pray for wisdom on how Metro-Richmond's Christian community can make a difference.

3

Leadership Groups in Metropolitan Richmond

There are at least seven major leadership groups that influence Metropolitan Richmond. They can collectively establish the culture and values of our region and can be seen as a reflection of it. Each group has its own mission and each group has the potential to use its influence for the good of our region or for its own self-serving purpose.

In today's world it is easy for us to believe that the government-judicial-political leadership is the ultimate leader in a city. Perhaps this belief comes from the extensive media coverage given to government related issues and its elected officials. This amount of attention can give a false impression of the amount of power ascribed to these elected positions. William Wilberforce, an 18th Century English Parliamentarian, who is credited with abolishing the slave trade, said "politics is downstream of the culture". What Wilberforce said is true, both then and now. Government-judicial-political leadership in a city follows the culture of that city.

The following is a list of the major leadership groups within any city that simultaneously reflect, influence and establish the culture and identity of a city (this list does not represent any order of importance):

1. **Education:** for literacy and intellectual and technical training
2. **Media:** for communication of news and information
3. **Entertainment:** provides a variety of avenues for relaxation and enjoyment
4. **Business – Corporate:** provides jobs, goods and services to a community
5. **Religious-faith based:** strengthens peoples' faith in God and communicates godly values and moral standards for a community

6. **Government-Judicial-Political:** responsible for the infrastructure that provides justice, stability and community services
7. **Health Care:** provides health and wellness for the community as well as establishing public health standards

Observing how these leadership groups relate and balance each other helps explain why a city has its own unique personality and identity. A city may be known as an industrial city, a college town, a military community, etc. Cities are also identified by the values they embrace. A city for example, that promotes gambling or alcohol, will often derive its identity from these activities.

Even though the missions of these leadership groups are distinctly different, all have the potential to use their influence for the good of our region or for their own self-serving purpose. When considering Metropolitan Richmond, we can ask ourselves which groups have the most influence on the culture of our region. We should try to determine if the influence of the Christian community appears to be increasing or diminishing. In order for the Christian community to influence our region, we must be strong enough to influence the other leadership groups. If the goodness of God and his ways can be established within these groups, then they will have the potential to be a model to their spheres of responsibility and influence. If this happens, then our city and counties will be blessed.

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Find a gathering of Christian leaders who have a vision for Christ's influence to affect our region, and then pray together. As we pray, relationships will be established and a vision will grow.

The Body of Christ in Metropolitan Richmond

The Christian community in Metropolitan Richmond is facing significant challenges as our desire grows to influence our region. Two major challenges in particular are the isolation between the local churches and the absence of a collective vision to give direction and purpose. It is important that we recognize these challenges in order to develop a strategy to counter them.

In Metro-Richmond the churches are isolated from each other because of differences of denomination, ethnicity, economics and a host of other factors. This isolation is unhealthy because it often breeds distrust. This is the exact opposite of a trusting relationship that must exist between churches if cooperation is ever to develop.⁴³ Without significant cooperation our Christian community cannot become a conduit of Christ's truth, influence and blessing into our region. Isolated congregations are generally the consequence of the isolation that exists among their leaders.

The other major challenge is the absence of a collective regional vision that is necessary to give a sense of direction and purpose. Without a clear vision there will not be the perseverance needed to sustain the effort and sacrifice required to move from what we desire in our hearts to make it become reality. The following issues account largely for the absence of a collective regional vision among our local churches.

a. A collective city or regional vision within our Christian community has not been included as a priority over the last thirty years. There has been an emphasis on individual salvation, family development, local church focus and on national & international missions.

b. The many needs of our local region can often overwhelm our faith. The immensity of problems such as poverty, pornography, racism can seem insurmountable and can be paralyzing to any single church. In order to keep from being overwhelmed, it would require the local Christian community as a whole to come together

and take ownership of working towards solutions to these issues and problems.

c. As a consequence of mass communications, many Christians have lost a sense of local responsibility. The media and entertainment industries seem to focus mainly on national and worldwide events and thus are able to shift the attention of their audience away from relevant local issues. This constant exposure to a national focus is one reason why many Christians have become disconnected from their responsibilities locally.

In order for our Christian community to influence our region, we must develop plans to address these challenges. Our Christian leadership must implement a strategy to tackle both the isolation that exists among most churches and the lack of a collective vision for our region. If relationships, prayer and a vision grow among our Christian leaders, then subsequent cooperation among their congregations would begin to develop and become the basis of regional partnerships.

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Pulpit exchange is a healthy dynamic within any local Christian community. Help begin or facilitate this between some of the area churches.

5

Christian Leadership

When reviewing the primary leadership groups that influence our region, the Christian leadership should be the most important and relevant group. Investing time and resources into strengthening the relationship fabric of this group of leaders will be of significant benefit for Metropolitan Richmond.

In Metropolitan Richmond, the Christian leadership consists of the leaders of the local churches, leaders of para-church ministries and lay Christian leaders. Their dedication and belief that God has drawn them and guided them is the foundation of their leadership. The grace of God has instilled in these men and women a sense of destiny and commitment and has empowered them to serve, care and lead others.

The importance of this group of leaders is because they seek God's desire for our region and the people of Metro-Richmond.⁴⁴ This group of leaders has both an understanding of God's truth and holiness and has a vision to serve.⁴⁵ In addition to their capacity to care and to love, our Christian leaders promote and value strong character development in people.⁴⁶ They work towards the restoration and the rebuilding of broken lives by teaching and encouraging forgiveness to replace bitterness and anger.⁴⁷ They articulate a vision for generosity and service.⁴⁸ They recognize and promote the protective purposes of God's moral boundaries that are a blessing to our region.⁴⁹ The Christian leadership also has access and influence, through their congregations, to a significant percentage of our region's population.

It is critical that a strategy be implemented to facilitate the development of relationships between the Christian leaders of our city and counties. The impact that these leaders can have will only take place if there exists a strong relationship fabric among them. The scriptures clearly teach us, "...every house divided against itself cannot stand".⁵⁰ Therefore, every investment of time and resources dedicated to strengthening the relationship fabric connecting these leaders will yield significant benefit.⁵¹ Obeying

the scriptural mandate “to love one another with a pure heart fervently” is fertile soil for mutual prayer and vision to grow.⁵² As this growth takes place, the potential for our local churches to serve our region together can be realized.⁵³ The importance of an infrastructure for relationship development among our local Christian leaders cannot be understated.

There is no limit to the impact Christian leaders of different doctrinal and ethnic backgrounds can have if they experience a unity in the shared vision to see Christ glorified. As our local pastors and congregations pray and serve together in this unity, we can then become a conduit for Christ’s grace and blessing to influence our city and counties. This fundamental foundation of unity is the fruit of the investment made into the relationship development between Christian leaders.

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Host a dinner or lunch for 2-5 local pastors, with or without spouses, just to thank them and honor them. Create a fun moment of fellowship and mutual support. Do no recruiting at this gathering.

6

The Need for Church-to-Church Relationship

Metro-Richmond's churches must be in relationship with one another in order to accomplish the external mission given to this Christian community by God. This mission is to serve our region and to draw those who do not know Christ to God.

Church-to-church relationship is important because God has a plan and a desire for Metro-Richmond.⁵⁴ God's desire is that "all might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth".⁵⁵ Christ's prayer: "Thy kingdom come...to earth", referring to his kingdom of "righteousness, peace and joy", is also an expression of God's desire that our region would know his goodness.⁵⁶ God cares about the people here. His Church, the Christian community in our region, is a vehicle for the expression of that care.⁵⁷

The most formidable enemy to God's plan is Satan. The scriptures tell us that he is an enemy that comes only to kill, steal and destroy and that his entire purpose is evil.⁵⁸ The scriptures teach us that to love God is to hate evil.⁵⁹ One of Satan's primary strategies that he uses against each Christian community is division by any and every means.⁶⁰ Simply knowing God's desire for unity and Satan's desire for division, we can understand why there needs to be church-to-church relationship instead of isolation and division.

Church-to-church relationship and cooperation in no way undermines each church's value, uniqueness or mission.⁶¹ The purpose of each church individually, as well as corporately, is to be salt and light to our region, a refuge from the storm and a hospital for those emotionally and relationally sick.⁶² They are to reflect God's holiness and purity and articulate the way of salvation for those who are lost. The churches are to glorify God in worship and in authentic relationships.⁶³ The internal mission of the Church is fulfilled as each individual church gathers, cares and trains those in its congregation. Each local church also has an external mission towards our region.⁶⁴

The external mission of the Church is to go out into our city and counties and draw those who do not know Christ to God. This is accomplished most effectively if our region's churches are in relationship with the other local churches.⁶⁵ There are at least two obvious reasons for this. First and most importantly, God has made his Church, the Body of Christ, one body.⁶⁶ God never designed the Church to be comprised of isolated and disconnected groups. Second, the needs of Metro-Richmond are far too big for any individual church. Local churches need to be connected in a way that one church's strengths will complement another's weaknesses. As this occurs, then the strengths of each church will benefit the whole Christian community locally.

Similar to a pipeline that brings water from a reservoir to a thirsty city, the well-connected Christian community is to be one large pipeline through which the love of Christ can reach into our needy region. Isolated churches, on the other hand, that do not have any sort of connection with one another, can not accomplish their mission to reach this region just as a disconnected pipeline will fail to carry a steady stream of water.

Connected churches operating in unity will be in a position to be a steady, vibrant conduit of God's truth, mercy and grace to our region. As local churches care for those within their congregations and together reach out to care for those outside their congregations, then Metro-Richmond's Christian community will become "the light of the world".⁶⁷ Our culture is desperate to see this light and come out of its darkness.

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Gather 2-5 youth pastors whose Christian students attend the same middle school(s) or high school(s). Have lunch together and then spend some time praying for these particular schools and the non-Christian students attending them.

The Connection between Churches

Any connection between churches has to be based on God's eternal truths. If our local churches will build these relationships among themselves, they can then together become a conduit for Christ's care and influence to spread out into our city and counties. If this happens, then Metro-Richmond will be blessed.

The following are a list of some of God's foundational truths upon which the local churches are to build their relationships:

- 1) God has given every Christian the purpose to glorify Christ⁶⁸
- 2) God blesses and values relationships between Christians⁶⁹
- 3) Through prayer, God teaches us to depend on Him and demonstrates to us His faithfulness⁷⁰
- 4) God blesses the unity that develops in the mutual pursuit to glorify Christ with our lives⁷¹

Christ's purpose was to **glorify God**.⁷² As Christians, we also have been given this same purpose to glorify God.⁷³ The Holy Spirit's ministry is to make this a reality in our lives.⁷⁴

Relationships that are built on love and trust must be the standard among Christians. Christ-centered relationships cross cultural, economic and denominational boundaries as we desire to obey the scriptural command to love one another. These relationships will be a witness of Christ's reality to this unbelieving world as well as cause us to experience the blessing of God.⁷⁵

Prayer is another foundational principal. Even though it may appear that prayer is a weak and feeble endeavor, it is in fact one of the most powerful God-given tools given to Christians for change.⁷⁶ Prayer is our access into God's presence to receive mercy and grace as we live dependent on him.⁷⁷ When we pray, we

learn to trust him both individually and corporately with Christians of different denominational, culture and economic backgrounds.⁷⁸ As we pray we also experience that God is faithful.⁷⁹

Unity is what God desires; it develops from the mutual pursuit to see God glorified in everything we do. God will bless this unity and use it to be a witness of his existence and love to this unbelieving world.⁸⁰

If the Christian leadership of our region models these truths, then their congregations will emulate them. As our Christian community fully embraces and lives these truths, Christ's care and influence will spread beyond our local churches into our region. Our city and counties will be blessed and hopefully one day we will experience transformation in response to God's blessing and goodness.

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Create or build an electronic database of local Christian leaders. Postal addresses, email addresses, phone and fax numbers will be needed for efficient and consistent communications.

8 Unity

“That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” John 17:21

God places a high premium on unity and therefore so should we. This emphasis on unity occurs throughout the scriptures and was Jesus’ last prayer for his disciples prior to entering the Mount of Olives.⁸¹ The love and fruitfulness of the early Christians highlights the desirability of Christ-centered unity.⁸²

Unity is a description of the relationship that develops between Christians whose foremost purpose in life is to glorify God in everything they do. Unity is blessed by God and is evidence to the world of Christ’s divinity.⁸³ It is never achieved by conformity.

Our Christian community will fail to become a conduit of God’s love if our local churches are isolated from one another by denomination, ethnicity or economics.⁸⁴ These differences will diminish and fade as we endeavor to see God glorified in everything we do.

Jesus clearly defines for us what it means to glorify God, “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the works which thou gave me to do”.⁸⁵ We glorify God by being obedient to live and finish the unique plan and works that he has purposed for each one of us.⁸⁶

As we desire to glorify God individually and collectively as his church, unity will grow. As Christian leaders and congregations operate in unity, tangible partnerships and campaigns designed to serve Metro-Richmond will be the visible evidence that this is taking place. These partnerships and campaigns will focus on and express themselves in the following areas:

1. Demonstrating God’s compassion towards the poor and needy.
2. Articulating the protective moral boundaries that God has established.

3. Communicating the hope of salvation available through Christ.

Through these tangible partnerships and campaigns, many people not connected to a church will be drawn into local churches. In our local churches they can grow in relationship with God, be healed of their emotional and relational wounds and will gradually be transformed into his disciple. Our city and counties will be impacted and God will be glorified.

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Help facilitate or create partnerships or projects between our local churches. Programs for food collection with the food bank or a regional prayer gathering are always beneficial.

Today's Pastor: Little Time for Friendships

Most pastors have very little time to develop fulfilling friendships with other pastors. One reason for this is that today's job description for pastors is impossible to accomplish. The emotional, physical and spiritual demands of the pastorate are all-consuming such that friendships and partnerships with other pastors rarely develop.

The isolation between Metro-Richmond's local churches is often a consequence of the isolation between the local pastors. Below we will discuss a few of the numerous dynamics that contribute to isolation among our local pastors.

Pastor to pastor friendships suffer because their daily responsibilities are so demanding and exhausting. Many do not even attempt to cultivate and build friendships within their own church family, much less outside of it. This isolation increases a pastor's vulnerability to be overwhelmed when confronted with the numerous issues of their own congregation. This is one reason that pastors need friendships with other pastors in order to strengthen and encourage one another. Besides the ministerial support, the benefits for pastors of authentic relationships that create fulfilling friendships are numerous and would be a significant personal blessing.

In Metro-Richmond there is minimal infrastructure that brings Christian leaders together from different churches for relationship development and prayer. The majority of citywide gatherings of pastors and other Christian leaders are usually to recruit them for a particular project or ministry focus. These moments often become just another demand on their time and finances with minimal

relationship value. Eventually, we see that the effects of these gathering often leave them feeling manipulated and devalued. This is because more value is placed on their leadership position than on who they are as individuals.

Communication between pastors about logistics of meetings and events is another significant problem. This is because in our region there is inadequate infrastructure such as a commonly used Christian web page or an easily accessible database to facilitate communication. The need for consistent communications is critical when it comes to the planning and logistics of meetings. A communications infrastructure is also very important to sustain momentum for relationship development and growth. Without this infrastructure, isolation will not be reversed.

These are a few of the reasons that our churches and church leaders are isolated from each other. None is insurmountable and all can be addressed and reversed. It is very important that we understand the difficult situation of our local pastors. This understanding will enable us to initiate solutions that are an asset to them and to the congregations they serve.

A step to facilitate church-to-church cooperation:

Create moments for friendships between pastors: a golf outing, a baseball game, times together with spouses, etc.

10

Practical Steps

In obedience and faith we can initiate practical steps to build an infrastructure consistent with Biblical principals to facilitate church to church relationship. Then together we can influence Metropolitan Richmond with Christ's truth and mercy.

As we seek to identify practical steps to strengthen our local Christian community in its ongoing mission to bless our region, the account of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1st Kings 18 is a good analogy to consider. After a prolonged drought, Elijah confronted King Ahab and challenged him to summon the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel. At Mt. Carmel, Elijah spoke and the people agreed: “the God that answers by fire, let him be God”. Then Elijah and the prophets of Baal each built an altar and sacrificed a bull. The prophets of Baal called upon Baal. Baal never answered. Elijah called upon God. The Lord answered and sent fire from heaven that consumed his altar and sacrifice. Then the people fell down and worshiped God.

This is a picture for us today. Although Elijah's altar was visible to the people as was Elijah's faith, the people did not fall down and worship God until the fire fell from heaven. Obedience, faith and sacrifice were all part of this process that eventually culminated in the worship of God. Today, God's commandment to “love one another” and his prayer that “they be one” still require obedience, faith and sacrifice, analogous to Elijah's altar. We read that Elijah's altar and sacrifice bore witness to his faith, yet these did not change the people's hearts. It is also true that authentic relationships and unity bear witness to our faith, though these too will not change an unbeliever's heart. The people's hearts were changed only when the fire fell from heaven and consumed the altar and the sacrifice. It is the same today as then, only the faithfulness and power of God will change the non-believer's heart. We must seek grace both for ourselves to be obedient to his ways and for the unbeliever's change of heart.

In obedience and faith we can initiate practical steps to build an infrastructure consistent with Biblical principals in the areas listed below. Many of these following suggestions have already begun in Metropolitan Richmond. (We will not attempt to list each specific initiative because our exposure is limited and because things change quickly. To get an idea of our perception of where we are in this process, please contact the authors)

- A. Gather Christian leaders for relationship development and prayer.**
- B. Develop a communications system for the Christian community.**
- C. Support the development of partnerships and campaigns that build on the foundation of authentic relationships, prayer and shared-vision.**

A. Gather Christian leaders for relationship and prayer:

The goal is to facilitate the development of authentic relationships between local Christian leaders. In any locality there needs to be an investment of time and finances into an infrastructure of consistent relationship development and prayer. The following is a list of ideas, suggestions or guidelines about the development of this infrastructure:

1. Gather with other like-minded Christians who have a regional or citywide vision. Pray and seek God on what are the best steps presently for building infrastructure.
2. Identify or create a local networking organization that has a 501 C-3 tax-deductible status that can handle the accounting.
3. Organize a special event to gather Christian leaders. An out-of-town retreat for prayer and relationship is a good option. The yearly regional

prayer-breakfast on the National Day of Prayer is a good building moment.

4. Gather Christian leaders monthly for a meal, fellowship and prayer. This way momentum can build towards the larger gatherings.
5. Invite spouses whenever possible.
6. Make the events as much fun as possible.
7. Do neither recruiting nor project promotion at these events.
8. These events can be inclusive for all the Christian leadership groups or may focus on a particular group of Christian leaders, i.e. youth pastors or pastors or corporate or lay-Christian or para-church.
9. Create opportunities that serve these leaders, that bless their marriages or that help them in their leadership responsibilities.
10. One particular group of leaders, such as professional or corporate, could host a dinner to honor another group of leaders, i.e. pastors or youth pastors or para-church. One example is a Friday or Saturday night banquet to honor and to pray for a particular group of leaders. This is tremendously encouraging.

B. Develop a communications system for the Christian leadership:

Communications within the Christian community is a major hurdle in any region. A communications system for the Christian leadership (pastors, youth leaders, para-church leaders and Christian lay-leaders) is necessary for at least three reasons:

- There can be no clear vision development without consistent communication.
- Relationships will not grow if there is no consistent communication.
- The logistics and details of citywide leadership meetings or multi-congregational meetings require precise and consistent communications.

Our society's communications infrastructure includes telephone, postal mail, fax, radio, television, email, web pages and newspapers. All are an option depending on time, money and the target audience. In today's world the most consistent, the most efficient, the least time consuming and the least expensive is electronic: email and web page technology. The following is a list of ideas, suggestions or guidelines about the infrastructure of communications:

1. Our electronic Christian leaders' database needs to be more easily assessable to the Christian leaders across our region. Its use should be limited to region-wide leadership events and large gatherings.
2. It is not to be used for ministry fund raising.
3. It is updated frequently because of the numerous changes that occur.
4. Information most frequently needed is postal addresses, email and phone numbers.
5. A local Christian webpage is a real asset for communication. It should have an accurate calendar of Christian events, regional meetings and relevant information for the local Christian leadership.

C. Support the development of partnerships and campaigns that build on the foundation of authentic relationships, prayer and shared-vision:

These campaigns should be a vehicle to build upon the foundation of relationship, prayer and a shared-vision. If this foundation is strong, then the resulting partnerships will add momentum to the building process as the events are planned and goals are accomplished.

The following is a list of ideas, suggestions or guidelines about partnerships and projects:

1. The desired goal of a project must be kept in the forefront. Set aside issues that cause division and debate because they will only fracture relationship and prayer. Focus instead on issues where there is commonality between Metro-Richmond's various Christian groups.
2. If the purpose of a campaign is to increase visibility for a local or national ministry, then the campaign will undermine relationship development.
3. Good projects to use for regional building are prayer gatherings, youth focused events or programs to serve the poor.
4. Whenever possible, utilize preexisting community social structures. A good example is with food collection. The local food bank can help with logistics as churches are coordinated in a food collection program.
5. Pulpit exchange is a very healthy city dynamic. It is rewarding for pastors and congregations. To have a regular regional pulpit-exchange program,

a mid-level organizational component will be needed to assist with logistics.

Just like Elijah's altar, as we build the infrastructure, we will be totally dependent on the grace of God to change the hearts of the non-Christians. The infrastructure, as described previously, will both facilitate the development of church-to-church relationship and will bear witness to our trust in God. As local churches become connected, they can then be a conduit for Christ's influence, truth and mercy to spread beyond themselves into our region. One day, just as sovereign as the fire falling from heaven, may Christ's and our prayer be answered, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven".

11

To Do Our Best

For the sake of the broken and the lost, let us strive to do our best. Our hope is that the shared-vision to glorify Christ will become a life style of Christ-centered unity. If this happens, then this local Christian community will be able to maximize its potential to influence, serve and care for our region. This is the best we can do. Therefore, after having done our best, let us trust, wait and hope for God's grace to do its transforming work in Metropolitan Richmond.

In an article written by Alan Doswald entitled *The Largest Company in Your City* he says, "The Church is life and death in its city. Its vital role however, is not realized until it is mobilized".

The scripture affirms the amazing potential of the Church when it says, "How good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forever more".⁸⁷ Other scriptural references: "Two are better than one" and "five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight" speak of the synergy and strength of cooperation.⁸⁸ These are just a few of the numerous scriptures that give great hope when there is authentic relationship, prayer and shared-vision.

It seems difficult for Christians to imagine the blessing to their church and our region when one church's strengths complement another's weaknesses. Perhaps this is because very few in Richmond have experienced Christ-centered unity as the foundation of church-to-church cooperation.

If our Christian community walks in a lifestyle of Christ-centered unity, then we will fulfill Christ's words, "Ye are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden". When this happens, our Christian community, a foreshadowing of heaven, representing many nations, kindred and people will be praying and working together in areas of service, care and evangelism for our region.⁸⁹ The Church will fulfill its role by influencing Metro-Richmond in moral leadership and by serving the poor. Christians

will use their positions of influence in government, education, healthcare, media, entertainment and business to serve. This is the best we can do as we wait and hope for the transformation that comes through God's grace and sovereignty. If this happens, God alone, through Jesus Christ, will be glorified.

In conclusion, we know that earth will never be heaven and we are but strangers and pilgrims on this earth.⁹⁰ While we are here on earth, let us be diligent to receive grace to become like Christ and be his ambassadors to Metropolitan Richmond.⁹¹ May our greatest desire be to glorify our Father with our lives while we hope and pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven".⁹² May his abounding grace operate in our lives in the fulfillment of the scripture: "because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ and for your generosity..."⁹³

Statement of Faith:

1. The Bible is the infallible word of God. It is truth.
(2 Peter 1: 20-21, Hebrews 4:12, John 1:1, 1:14, 2 Timothy 3:16)
2. Relationship with God Almighty and our Lord Jesus Christ are possible only through the forgiveness and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ at the Cross. (John 14:6, Acts 4:12)
3. Our most important relationship is with Jesus Christ, then ourselves (self-acceptance), then family, friends and even our enemies. (John 17:3, Matthew 19:19, Ephesians 5:20-33, Matthew 12:48-50, Proverbs 27:9, Matthew 5:44-48)
4. The reflection of a successful life is good relationships.
(1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
5. God will spend our lifetime enlarging our capacity to love others. (Luke 6:27-38, 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)
6. The key to honor is to be a servant. (John 12:24-26)
7. The secret of joy is obedience to God. (Hebrews 1:9)
8. The safest place to be is in the center of God's will.
(Psalm 91)

Thoughts and concepts:

1. People are to be objects of our love, not our expectations.
2. Relationships are more important than activities (social, career, entertainment).
3. Relationships are built on Godly character.
4. Godly character is more important than ability (athletic, intellectual, physical beauty)
5. Godly success is defined by obedience, not results.
6. America will be changed one local city/community at a time.
7. Relationship building creates trust; trust is the foundation of cooperation; cooperation in service, prayer and evangelism creates community impact.
8. Relationship isolation that is maintained by distrust will breed distrust.
9. Leadership is influence. Leadership is not power, wealth, position or fame. We are influenced by those we trust. We trust character and vision.
10. If leaders are gathered in an atmosphere of trust, there will be an explosion of leadership.
11. Diversity in people is an expression of God's infinite diversity.

Footnotes:

¹ Matthew 16: 15-18 Matthew 16: 15-18 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Romans 1:16 ...it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

² Matthew 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

³ Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.

⁴ John 17:1-4 "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee...I have glorified thee on thee earth: I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do"

⁵ John 16: 13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.

⁶ John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.

⁷ John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

⁸ John 17:22-23 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

⁹ Acts 4:32- 5:14 And the multitude of them that believe were of one heart and one soul...And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all...And the believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women.

Psalms 133: 1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forever more.

¹⁰ Jeremiah 29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord

for it: for in the peace thereof, shall you have peace.

¹¹ Matthew 5:14-16 Ye are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden...let your light shine before men...

¹² Acts 19:1-20 ...and this continued by the space of 2 years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks...many that believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. So mightly grew the word of God and prevailed.

¹³ Jeremiah 9:24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord that exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true and that we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Philippians 3:10 That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death

¹⁴ Ephesians 1:6-7 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

¹⁵2 Corinthians 5:17-18 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled all things unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation:

¹⁶ Mark 12:30-13 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. (see earlier footnote #1)

¹⁷Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Acts 11:26 ...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

¹⁸John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

¹⁹1Thessalonians 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

1Thessalonians 4:9-10 But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.

Matthew 5:44-48 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you:... for if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans do the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 ...and have not charity, I am nothing....and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

²⁰Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

Mark 10:6-14 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder...Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:31-6:4 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church....And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

²¹Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another....

Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Luke 8:21 ...My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.

²²Luke 19:41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.

Jonah 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle.

²³Psalms 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance

²⁴Exodus 20:12 Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
Honor thy father and mother... nurture and admonition of the Lord.

²⁵ 1 Timothy 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

John 13:1-17 ...having loved his own which were in this world...Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.....began to wash the disciples feet...For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you...happy are ye if ye do them.

²⁶ 1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous.

²⁷ Psalm 122:1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

(see footnote #3)

Ephesians 2:18-22 For through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father. Now therefore...In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

²⁸ Matthew 9:12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick....for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

2 Timothy 2:2-4 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

²⁹ Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Luke 8:21 ...My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

³⁰ Jeremiah 29:11 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

(see footnote #4)

³¹ 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 And all things are of God...and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

³² Luke 6:27-35 ...Love your enemies,...for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.

(see footnote #6)

³³ Matthew 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Acts 17:6These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also

³⁴ Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father...

(see footnote #5)

³⁵ Revelation 7:9-12 (NIV)

³⁶ ‘Study of the Status of Virginia’s Families’, House Document No. 57, Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995, page 32

³⁷ Source: Virginia Department of Health Center for Vital Records and Health Statistics

³⁸ ‘Study of the Status of Virginia’s Families’, House Document No. 57, Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995, page:24

³⁹ Father Facts (Fourth Edition) 2002, National Fatherhood Initiative

⁴⁰ One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008 Public Safety Performance Project, The Pew Center on the States

⁴¹ See #40

⁴² see footnote #2

⁴³ Psalm 107:4-7 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

Judges 18:7 ...and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything, and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man.

Isaiah 47:8 Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me: I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.

⁴⁴ 1 Samuel 2:30 ...for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

⁴⁵ Mark 9:35 ...If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

John 21:15-17 ...Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea Lord: thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs....Feed my sheep...Feed my sheep.

James 2:8-9 If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

⁴⁶ 1 Tim 4:8 ...but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Pro 10:9 He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

Pro 11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

Pro 13:6 Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

⁴⁷ Eph 4:22-32 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt...put on the new man...putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor:...Let all bitterness, and wrath...be put away from you, with all malice:...forgiving one another...

Matthew 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.

⁴⁸ Luke 6:38 Give and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together...

⁴⁹ Ps 40:11 ...let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

Pro 6:26-35 ...the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom and, and his clothes not be Burned? ...he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul...

⁵⁰ Matthew 12:25 ...and every city or house divided against itself cannot stand

⁵¹ Psalm 133:1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Judges 18:7-28 ...how they dwelt careless...quiet and secure...and had no business with any man...when Micah saw they were too strong for him...and they smote them with the edge of the sword...And there was no deliverer...and they had no business with any man:

Isaiah 47:8-10 ...thou that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am and none else beside me: I shall not be as a widow...Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted the, and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.

⁵² Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish...

Mark 12:35 ...Every kingdom divided against itself is bought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falleth

1 Peter 1:22...see that ye love one another with a pure heart feverently:

⁵³ James 4:2 ...yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

⁵⁴ John 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Luke 13:34, Matthew 23:37: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

⁵⁵ 1 Timothy 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth...

John 17:18-20 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might

be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

⁵⁶ Matthew 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

⁵⁷ 2Corinthians 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Ephesians 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

⁵⁸ John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy:...

⁵⁹ Psalm 97:10 Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.

Psalm 34:21 Evil shall slay the wicked...

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil....

⁶⁰ Matthew 12:25 ...Every kingdom divided against itself is bought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31 For as the Body is one....and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

⁶² Matthew 9:12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.....for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Matthew 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth:...

⁶³ Psalm 22:3 But thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel

John 15: 8-12 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit...This is my commandment that love on another as I have loved you.

Psalm 107:32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

⁶⁴ Acts 2:42-47 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

⁶⁵ Ephesians 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

⁶⁶ Ephesians 4:16 (see footnote 12)

1 Corinthians 12: 18-28 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I

have no need of you....And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers...

Romans 12: 4-16 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...Be of the same mind one toward another...

⁶⁷ Matthew 5:14 ..ye are the light of the world

⁶⁸ John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.

⁶⁹ 1 John 4:12 ...if we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us.

⁷⁰ 2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

⁷¹ Acts 4:10-33 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole...Neither is there salvation in any other...for all men glorified God for that which was done...they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth,...and when they had prayed, the place was shaken....And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:...And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

⁷² John 12:27-28 Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

John 17:1-4 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee...I have glorified thee on thee earth: I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do.

⁷³ John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.

⁷⁴ John 16:13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.

⁷⁵ John 15:12 This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another...

1 John 4:12 ...If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us'

76 I Timothy 2:8 I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

John 14: 12-13 Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do:

because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall anything in my name, I will do it.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

77 Jeremiah 33:3 Call upon me and I will answer thee and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

⁷⁸ Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not on your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

⁷⁹ 2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

⁸⁰ John 17:22-23 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

⁸¹ Luke 22:39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

⁸² Acts 2:42-47 And they continued steadfastly...such as should be saved.

⁸³ Psalm 133: 1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity, ...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

John 17:21 That they all... as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

⁸⁴ Matthew 12:25 ...Every kingdom divided against itself is bought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

⁸⁵ John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

⁸⁶ Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

⁸⁷ Psalm 133: 1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

⁸⁸ Leviticus 26:8 And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight:...

⁸⁹ Revelation 7:9-10...of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb...

⁹⁰ Hebrews 11:13...and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...

⁹² Matthew 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven...

⁹³ Romans 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

2 Corinthians 9:8-13 (NIV) God is able to make all grace abound towards you...and for your generosity...