

Why All-Church Axioms?

We love our church and want to help one another live with an ongoing sense of health, connection, and commitment to our mission. As we continue to see new people join our family, we want to put in writing some things that describe who we are. Our church has a significant amount of clarity and conviction about our mission and vision that is part of our church culture. Culture is something you experience with a group of people walking together in a particular place and time. As always, our heart is to help people grow spiritually.

We are calling these statements axioms. An axiom is a clear and concise idea or statement set forward and accepted by a community. So, we want these axioms to (1) introduce new people to our culture, and (2) serve as guideposts to keep us on track as we move forward together. We think this will encourage us to live out our key commitments as a family. This also gives us a healthy place to grow as we learn new things from new friends and make course corrections as needed down the road.

These will be “living” axioms, meaning they will likely morph or change over time. It might be helpful to think of these as our current operating system, which may need changes and updates in the future. This means that we may add some in the future, and we may edit or hone others.

You will be part of learning and spreading these around in the normal life of our church: our membership process, team huddles, small groups, ministry meetings, and more. They will be used as teaching and conversation tools to keep us focused.

In the end, these ought to help us live out our mission and vision:

- Our mission is to make authentic followers of Jesus who live for the glory of God and the good of our world.
- Our vision is to help everyday people wake up to deep, meaningful life in Christ.

6: JESUS FLIPPED LEADERSHIP UPSIDE DOWN.

Everything in Jesus' life and ministry seemed to be exactly the opposite of what people expected. This is captured beautifully in Philippians 2:1-11, where we read, "though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." This is the most shocking and mind-blowing leadership move in history: God over all became the servant of all to the point of sacrificing his very life for the good of all.

In the history of the church, this approach to life has become known as *the way of the cross*. It stands in contrast to *the way of glory*, which describes the typical approach to power and leadership that we see in the world. Thus, following Jesus means rejecting worldly approaches to leadership, which are often concerned with power, celebrity, significance, and status. We choose Jesus' upside-down way of the cross rather than the world's way of glory.

This is so important that Jesus commanded us to embrace his approach to life, building our lives on this upside-down approach to life and leadership. After washing the filthy feet of his disciples, Jesus said "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Leaders say, "Follow me as I follow Jesus." We walk in the path of humble service, self-forgetfulness rather than self-promotion, strength through weakness, grace over guilt, sacrificial love. We cannot effectively lead someone until they know we love them.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **We are all called to lead—somewhere.** The call of Christ to lead by serving affects all relationships: work life, marriage, parenting, etc. These relationships should experience gospel transformation as we learn to walk according to the upside-down kingdom values.
- **We are a team.** Like any team, we will have different strengths and weaknesses as well as different roles and responsibilities. Team members interact with honesty, transparency, and accountability to others. As we grow together in Christlikeness we may take on different roles and/or responsibilities within our teams, but we never outgrow the highest values of love and service to one another.
- **Church leadership roles are chief servant roles.** Elders, deacons, and others who lead are Christ-like examples for the church who do so in humble and sacrificial ways rather than domineering or compulsive ways.
- **We invite in, build up, send out, and cheer on others.** Leaders are called to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:11-16). We seek to outdo one another in honoring and celebrating others, looking out for their interests above our own.
- **We live for a King and a kingdom.** When we get leadership wrong, it usually means we want a kingdom without a King. But Christ already earned the right to the only throne in this kingdom, so we gladly submit to him and learn to live his upside-down way as a servant.