

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.

7: PRAYER IS THE PATH TO SPIRITUAL VITALITY.

Prayer is as counter-cultural a thing as we can do in a hyper busy, success obsessed, image aware, & media overloaded suburban culture. “American culture is probably the hardest place in the world to learn to pray. We are so busy that when we slow down to pray, we find it uncomfortable. We prize accomplishments, production. But prayer is nothing but talking to God. It feels useless, as if we are wasting time. Every bone in our body screams, ‘Get to work.’” (A Praying Life, 15)

This is actually why prayer is so important! Prayer forces us to look beyond ourselves. Jesus himself showed us the priority of praying to our Father in heaven: “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed” (Mark 1:35). Jesus modeled for us the way of union with God through prayer. Spiritual growth is fueled by a vibrant prayer life as we discover how to walk with God in real friendship that restores and re-centers our lives.

When we pray, we say, “I am not made for myself, and I was not intended to manage all of life on my own. Right now, I need God’s love, joy, grace, guidance, and help.” We seek a regular rhythm that balances (1) our confession of our need for God in our lives / church / world, and (2) our commitment to trust God with our lives / church / world. In prayer, whether individually or together, we seek God’s praise and presence, as well as his provision. We pray expectantly to our Heavenly Father who loves us and never leaves us.

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

- **Prayer is more caught than taught.** Like riding a bike, the best way to learn to pray is by praying. There is no way to download, absorb, read, or podcast a prayer life. It’s something you learn through doing the thing rather than observing something else doing it. The best way to grow a healthy prayer life is to pray.
- **Prayer is not a performance.** Don’t dress it up with impressive or “spiritual-sounding” language. Just talk to God like you would speak with your most trusted friend.
- **Praying fosters joy, hope, and strength in the Christian life.** Prayer is talking personally to God, and we grow through going directly to God ourselves. Over time, we discover an intimacy with God that we enjoy as he meets us in prayer, fellowship, and deep dependence upon him.
- **Prayer takes different forms for different purposes.** We need a well-rounded approach to our prayer lives that includes praying in a church gathering with a large group, praying in small groups of spiritual friends, praying alone. We need to pray silently, and we need to pray out loud. We may experience kingdom prayer, abiding prayer, intercessory prayer, moment-by-moment prayers, daily rhythms or discipline of setting aside times for prayer and solitude.