

## State of the Church: Returning to Our First Love and Fighting for Love

**Thesis:** God is calling us to return to our first love and to fight for love.

We have a high calling together-- to think, believe, and act in a manner worthy of the good news of Jesus. When we stand firm and fight as one, without giving in to fear, it strikes fear into the heart of the enemy.

**Text:** *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God (Philippians 1:27-28).*

### 1. Purpose

- a. We want to envision you and to call you to catch the vision of what God is doing.
  - i. **Here is what God is currently doing: God is calling us to return to our first love and to fight for love.**
- b. **We want to practice the discipline of reflection**, taking time to acknowledge and appreciate what the Lord is doing in our midst (Psalm 50:23).
- c. And, **we want to respond to where the Lord is challenging us to grow and change as a congregation**. Jesus said, "...hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Revelation 2:7).

### 2. Celebrate: What is going well or what our strengths are at Calvary...

- a. **People:** We have great people who deserve great leadership. They love God, they love each other, and they love what the Lord is doing.
- b. **Worship services:** It is a place of intimate encounter with the Lord. And recently, the Holy Spirit has been showing up and moving, especially at Ministry Time.
- c. **Finances:** We have a high percentage of people who tithe.
- d. **Building:** We have great facilities. Our facilities get used on Monday nights by a Filipino church, on Tuesday nights for community basketball and by Pastor Yefri, and on Sunday nights by Pastor Yefri. This is an expression of our kingdom nature and ministry.

- e. **Staff:** We have a great staff team that works well together; great team spirit and sacrificial service.
- f. **Elders:** We have a strong, godly, wise team of elders.
- g. **Deacons:** We have a team that works well together and serves Calvary effectively.
- h. **Children and youth ministries:** We have effective children and youth ministries which are discipling and reaching children and young people. Our leaders in these ministries are full of contagious passion, energy, and zeal. The lives of children and youth are changed through Bible Study, Wednesday night activities, VBS, Youth Camp, and other activities.
- i. **Wednesday night programs:**
  - i. Kids Club and Youth are reaching about 100 people, mostly from outside of Calvary.
  - ii. Pastor Steve's class is really touching lives.
- j. **Bible Study (for adults, children, and youth) and Equipping the Saints classes:** Gifted men and women are helping people walk with the Lord.
- k. **Kingdom / Missions:** We are touching and changing lives locally and globally. We love the body of Christ and seek to serve the Lord's kingdom purposes beyond the walls of our church. We network with pastors and ministries in our city and beyond.
- l. **Journey Groups:** I keep hearing great testimonies from the people who go to Journey Group—experiencing authenticity, feeling loved and cared for, receiving pastoral care.
- m. **Stewardship:** We are good stewards of what the Lord has entrusted to us.
- n. **Influence and impact:** We have influence and impact way beyond Calvary and Sunday mornings: MTT, Pastor Steve with PACA (Police and Clergy Alliance), coaching pastors and leaders, and speaking into different structures and ministries.
- o. **Foster and adoption:** We have really seen the Lord move in this area in our body. In just the last few years, 5 children have been fostered and adopted into our church body. The Bible is clear about caring for our widows and orphans. As Melanie Meeks shared, "We really felt the Lord saying, 'If not us, then who?'" Also, our church congregation as a whole has done a wonderful job of coming alongside us and other adoptive families with prayer, meals, babysitting, financial help for adoption expenses, etc.
- p. **Feedback from Ministry Leaders:**
  - i. People love Jesus in such a way that others are drawn to the Lord.

- ii. We minister well to people through small groups, ministry teams, and at other times.
- iii. We have an impactful Women's Ministry.
- iv. We help people to hear the Lord.
- v. We get encouraged by the testimonies of what God is doing.
- vi. Through intercession, we are touching the heart of God and standing on the wall.
- vii. Our people pray individually and corporately.
- viii. What we do, we do with excellence.
- ix. The heart of the youth to serve is amazing.
- x. Our leaders are transparent and lead with humility and servant hearts.
- xi. Our leaders communicate vision and direction effectively.
- xii. Our guest feels welcomed.
- xiii. New people continue to come and join with us in serving the Lord.
- xiv. Our new members and guests get involved quickly.
- xv. We have amazing Nursery Workers and nursery care system.
- xvi. We hear from the Lord and then we mobilize around initiatives that give us vision and purpose.
- xvii. We are a church that seeks the Lord and seeks to hear and follow after God.
- xviii. We have a longevity and faithfulness to serve others like though our Hairgrove Partnership, Freshwater, etc.

**3. Application:**

- a. What would you add to these lists?
- b. What is going well at Calvary?
- c. What are our strengths at Calvary?
- d. **Let's take some time to express our gratitude to the Lord.**
  - i. *He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God (Psalm 50:23 NIV).*
  - ii. Expressing thanks and gratitude does 2 things according to this verse:
    1. It honors the Lord.
    2. It prepares the way for the Lord to do more in our midst.
- e. *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them*

*that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God (Philippians 1:27-28).*

- i. Let's conduct our lives in a manner befitting the reality of the good news of Jesus.
- ii. Let's stand our ground and fight as one together **in faith** for what the Lord is doing among us and through us.
- iii. And, let's fight without fear, which God uses to strike fear into the heart of the enemy who opposes us.