

## REIGNITE, PART 1: STONEBROOK DNA

Stonebrook Sunday AM, 7/29/18, Matt Heerema

### INTRO

Last week, this week, and next, we are taking a short break from our walk-through study of John's Gospel. This week and next we wanted to spend some time here before we begin the ministry year, to take a step back and talk through the foundation of who we are as a church, and talk about our theme for this ministry year: Reigniting a commitment to Stonebrook's core mission and values.

Its this "core ideology", call it our "DNA" if you want to that I wanted to talk through this morning.

### My story

When I first got here 19 years ago, I was a fresh, recent, follower of Christ. I'm not sure if I was newly converted, or if emotionally and intellectually i was just starting to mature and so certain aspects of the faith had finally clicked. Like many of you, I grew up in a Christian home, and my father did an excellent job of introducing me to the faith, training me as a young man how to pray and read The Bible, showing me the importance of the church and making sure I was well instructed and exposed to good resources and opportunities to grow in my faith but it really wasn't until college that the dots all connected in a way that really caused me to own this Christianity thing for myself.

Through the love and work of a few people, Nancy being foremost among them, I realized that if God is who he says he is in this book, and Jesus is His son and did what this book says he did, then my whole life, every moment of it, is His by right, He is my Lord, my master. I must do what He says, and follow Him at every cost. All of my goals, dreams, hopes shifted away from myself and my desires, and my ideas.

I interpreted this as a call into full-time ministry as a missionary or a pastor. This was the only framework I had for fully-devoted Christian service at the time. Until I ran into you folks here at Stonebrook. Here, I saw a family of believers who took this stuff serious, every day, not just Sunday morning, and Wednesday night at youth group, which was my previous experience.

### Devoted to the fellowship and the prayers

Here, I saw prayer meetings where you all actually spoke to God, not just about vague or trivial matters, but about the deepest longings of your heart. I saw an expectation that God was hearing

you when you prayed and was going to move in response to your prayers. I didn't see this from all of you, but from many. I still see this. Not from all of you, but from many.

I saw a devotion to the family that is the church. I had always heard that the church is not the building but it is the people, but the way I had seen church play out made it definitely about the building or the club more-so than the family. Here I learned from you all that church is a family of families. I learned that when we speak of our Christian "brothers and sisters" that we mean that in a very real sense, not in some jargony sense.

I don't have any biological brothers, so its easier to relate to the fact that you women are as much, if not more-so, my sisters, than my biological sisters. (Whom I love dearly.) You, Stonebrook members, are my actual family. My mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. You have met my needs and the needs of my biological family when we had them, you take care of one another. Again, not all of the time, but most of the time.

And that's the other great thing, authenticity. When I say "not all of you" this is not a shocker. We admit that we are not doing these things perfectly. There is a reality about our spiritual walk. A willingness to admit that we don't have it all together. That we don't pray as much as we ought, that we don't take care of one-another as well as we could, but when we fail, we repent and make it right.

## **The Seven Pillars**

A few years in to my coming here, you all articulated these different pieces of your DNA in what we've called "the seven pillars" - (A name I always found funny as a student of world religions, because certain types of muslims have their seven pillars, but I got over that...) - Call these our core values, core ideology, distinctive, whatever you want to say these seven have shaped how we see and teach the Christian life over the years. As a church, our desire is to be Christians who are:

- |                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Fervently devoted to Christ | 5. Committed to biblical community |
| 2. Biblically minded           | 6. Socially responsible            |
| 3. Founded on integrity        | 7. Evangelistically bold           |
| 4. Family focused              |                                    |

And this year, in our theme of "Reignite", we are seeking to re-focus and re-commit to these seven values.

This morning though, to get at the real DNA of Stonebrook, that we're trying to articulate in these seven pillars, I wanted to go one layer deeper, and instead of explaining these seven, I wanted to get at the "why", the Scripture's explanation of who we are, so I want to make a quick transition here, that might feel a little jarring, and I want to look at Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where he reminds them of **who they are**.

## WHO GOD SAYS WE ARE

More important than our nicely packaged explanation of who Stonebrook is, is who God says we are. Right? So turn with me to Ephesians 2:19.

Let me set this up quickly as we turn there. [Summarize 1-2:18]

### Ephesians 2:19-3:21 (CSB)

2:19 So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, **but fellow citizens with the saints**, and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 **In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.**

3:1 For this reason, I, Paul...

v1-13 [MASSIVE TANGENT WITH THIS POINT: v10 **God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens.** ]]

3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. 16 I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to

- be **strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit**, 17 and
- that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you,
- being **rooted and firmly established in love**, 18 may
- be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, 19 and to
- **know Christ's love** that surpasses knowledge, so that you may
- **be filled with all the fullness of God.**

# FILLED WITH THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Doesn't that sound like a great goal? To be filled with all the fullness of God? I love that this is Paul's direct, tactical application of the truth of who the church is: "So I pray!" He prays that we understand who we are!

## THE SEVEN PILLARS, REDUX

So stay here in your Bibles for a minute, we'll come back to this prayer of Paul's. But back to our "seven pillars."

As we elders have sought to articulate who Stonebrook is in terms of our "core values" or our pillars, you'll notice that there isn't anything particularly innovative here. This is who the Bible tells us to be, and what the Bible tells us to do!

But I think that 19 years ago, that was another thing that caught my attention about you all here at Stonebrook. There was a simple clarity about the fact that we're simply trying to live out New Testament Christianity.

At the beginning of the Summer, as we thought through what God would have us focus on this coming ministry year, we wanted to continue on the "Renewal" theme from this past year, a renewal of prayer-filled expectation that God wants to work in our midst, and a renewal of relationship, and a renewal of mission in terms of the church plant and the facility.

We feel that we are to continue along that line, but to bring our attention to this core DNA that we believe God has given us to steward here as a congregation. We spent quite a bit of time in prayer and discussion on these and we felt that to help show this "reignition" of commitment, we wanted to reword these a bit here, just to help bring some attention and focus back to them.

We as a church are seeking to be:

- **Devoted to Christ** - Love the Lord with all our hearts. Matt 22:36-40. "To live is Christ." Phil 1:21
- **Biblically minded** - View life through the lenses of the Scriptures instead of the lenses of a secular world. 2 Tim 3:16-17. Rom 12:1-2
- **Walking in Godliness** - Walk in a manner worthy of him, in deed and character. Eph 4:1-3
- **Strengthening Families** - Equipping marriages, parenting, and households. Eph 5:22-6:4

- **Devoted to the Fellowship** - Devoted to the family of God. Acts 2:42. Live out the “one another” commands of the New Testament.
- **Serving the City** - Serve our community/campus through acts of mercy, neighbor, and vocation. Matt 5:14-16
- **Proclaiming Christ** - Ready to speak with one another, and with the world about Christ with boldness, love, and “fluency” in the gospel. 1 Peter 3:15

So, nothing new here, nothing particularly innovative. Simple restatements of what we’ve been about, but I will say that we as elders do feel we’ve been losing focus here, and as that happens we’ll lose some of these things we value highly.

The particular pillar that was on our own minds as an elder team that we feel we personally need to be working on shoring up is the final one: “Proclaiming Christ”. We have been working for the past several months on changing our schedules and routines in order to allow ourselves time to interact with more unchurched and unbelieving people.

We want to spend this year, just as elders, raising our game, before we start asking you as a congregation to do so. I’m already starting to see some cool opportunities open up as I do this, and I’ll be talking about that in smaller group settings rather than from the stage, but we just wanted you to know one way we’re beginning this theme of “Re-ignition”.

## LET US MAKE PAUL’S PRAYER OUR OWN.

For the rest of us, I think that if we want to improve in any one of these particular pillars, that there is one sure and simple place we can go. And it’s where Paul went. And this is where I want to leave us for the morning.

Let’s make Paul’s prayer our own. Ephesians 3:16-19

We pray that he may grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to

- be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, 17 and
- that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you,
- being rooted and firmly established in love, 18 may
- be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God’s love, 19 and to
- know Christ’s love that surpasses knowledge,
- so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read through the freshly re-worded “pillars”/core values of Stonebrook

- **Devoted to Christ** - Love the Lord with all our hearts. Matt 22:36-40. “To live is Christ.” Phil 1:21
- **Biblically minded** - View life through the lenses of the Scriptures instead of the lenses of a secular world. 2 Tim 3:16-17. Rom 12:1-2
- **Walking in Godliness** - Walk in a manner worthy of him, in deed and character. Eph 4:1-3
- **Strengthening Families** - Equipping marriages, parenting, and households. Eph 5:22-6:4
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1. What first attracted you to Stonebrook as a visitor? What caused you to stay?
2. Which of these core values do you think Stonebrook as a whole manifests most strongly? Which do you think we are weaker in? (Note: It can be difficult sometimes to want to point out areas of weakness, but “critique without condemnation” is a crucial principle in organizational health and growth. We need to be able to speak honestly about our strengths and weaknesses.)
3. Which of these core values do you think your life group manifests most strongly? Which are we weaker in?
4. Discuss ideas for utilizing your strengths to help bolster your weaker areas. (E.g. If you are strong in “devotion to the fellowship” but weak in “proclaiming christ”, how can you leverage your strong sense of family and fellowship to help reach out to the unbelieving and unchurched?)