

says, "Wow, they gathered a lot of people." Instead, strive for a legacy of transformation that will recall the life of your church as one that changed the lives of all who came into contact with it. Fight for the legacy of a church that changed the city within which it existed, and one that lifted up the name of Jesus to be worshiped and adored.

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Ferguson suggests that the church is at the center of the eternal purpose of God. Thus, we must leverage our most precious resource, the people of God, to that eternal purpose for the glory of God and the fame of Jesus. By establishing community groups as one of the primary ministries of the church, we can leverage the body of Christ for that mission. And when you take all of the ideas we have to help groups grow, nothing will bring life quicker than the tangible excitement of being used by God.

### 3

## OWNERSHIP

### BORROWED FAITH

Now that we have built a biblical foundation for community groups and understand their significance for the church, we have to ask how this leads to life in our groups. After all, having intellectual understanding does not necessitate change. That is because change occurs when, and only when, we take ownership of these principles and the mission of God saturates the church. As the people of God, we are the vehicle through which God is making his appeal to the world.<sup>1</sup> Within each believer is the potential for world transformation through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> When we awaken this truth in the body of Christ, we unleash the church.

I recently asked a couple, who I knew consistently attended church, about their convictions on a particular topic. It was not a tough question. I intended to find common ground for a light conversation. Their response was curious: "We believe whatever our pastor teaches." While I applaud their loyalty and trust in their pastor, this response was not a resounding expression of conviction.

Now, few evangelical churches would be satisfied with that level of belief (if it were a belief at all), yet this is the position that most churches take toward the mission of the church. Though they may be able to recite the mission statement, very few members have a deep conviction and ownership of it. In this chapter, we will explore the need to own the mission of your church and to instill that ownership within every member of the body.

## DEFINING MISSION

What does it mean for a church to be missional? In the first chapter, we established the idea that we are created for the purpose of displaying and proclaiming the gospel through transformed lives in community. In the second chapter, we established the place and purpose of community within the church. Community groups provide a vehicle for discipleship, pastoral care, and mission toward the purpose of displaying the gospel to the world. In this chapter we will begin to focus more intently on the function of mission.

The church exists "that together [we] may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Just as we exist as image bearers of God, so the church exists to reflect his goodness and to call people to worship him as we make disciples and proclaim the gospel.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, our view of the church can get so distorted that it seems as though God exists for the church. The mission of the church becomes to expand the church rather than to expand the worship of God.

When this happens, we create a church with a mission. The church is the sending agent and the mission is the active outworking of that church. Ed Stetzer, a leading missiologist in the church today, argues that this is a consistent historical mistake of the church.<sup>5</sup> To paraphrase Stetzer, missions should not be a hobby of the church. When we understand the mission of God, we realize that it is the *mission* that has a *church*, not the other way around. God has a mission—to call people to worship and exalt the Son through the work of the Holy Spirit. God is the sending agent and the church is the active outworking of the mission.

We cannot be content with the status quo of passive participation in the work of the church. The work of the church is the mission of God. In response to the grace we have received, we get to share the good news and radical truth of Jesus and what he has done.<sup>6</sup> It is, therefore, the great joy of the Christian to be an active part of that mission, proclaiming the gospel and living out its redeeming truth for the fame of Jesus. Alan Hirsch articulates the mission of the people of God as the "mission of every believer into every sphere and

domain of society."<sup>7</sup> As God's ambassadors on his mission, we get to share the gospel in every nook and cranny of the city. That is what it means to be missional: to be on mission with God.

Because the terms *mission* and *missional* are used in so many ways these days, we cannot even begin to call the church to missional thinking without first defining the term. Therefore, my definition of *missional* is "to participate in the mission of God as a response to the gospel through proclamation and practice."

The modern conversation regarding the missional church can be traced back to a conference of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, Germany, in 1952, which stated "there is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world."<sup>8</sup> Sadly, this statement may alienate much of Christendom. Yet, it clearly reflects the expectation that Jesus gave the church: to go and make disciples. As we share the gospel of Christ and reflect its redeeming power in our lives, we get to participate with God as he gathers more disciples to himself. We get to be a part of the gospel work for which we were born.

Therefore, we must have a clear picture of what it means to participate in the mission of God. In sum, we are to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ in word and action, not as pretentious judges intent on proving the stereotypes assigned to Christians that already taint the culture against the church, but as believers who remember what it was like to be lost. Peter reminds us that once we were lost, once we were isolated and not a people, once we had not received mercy; but now, through Jesus, we have been found.<sup>9</sup> To be on mission with Jesus is to remember that we were plucked from death through the grace of Christ. It was not our astute theology that saved us. We were once heretics, rebels, and heathens who hated God until he turned his face toward us. Therefore, our verbal proclamation of the truth of Christ must first be inspired by compassion—to engage our neighbors in a discourse and say, "I know what you are looking for; I was once there looking for it too, and I found the answer in Jesus."

I was talking with one of my leaders after he had another long conversation with a gentleman who had been frequenting Mars Hill

for the past six months. This man had attended men's retreats and multiple services each Sunday. Many of us had talked with him and shared the gospel with him. We had seen various levels of conviction and remorse but little repentance, as he was unwilling to put his faith in Christ. This leader was exasperated after his latest multiple-hour conversation. He was frustrated with the tears that didn't lead to change. He was almost angry that our friend still would not confess Jesus as Lord.

Why do we raise our voice when talking to someone who is blind? They aren't deaf; they just cannot see. Yet I completely sympathize with my friend's response. All the pieces had come together for this guy, yet he refused to believe. He could not argue anymore against the truth of Jesus's claims. Every challenge had been met, every argument countered, and even his heart seemed to be pierced by the reality of his sin. Yet he remained blind; his will was still in opposition to the truth of God. And therein lies the rub. A blind man will not see, no matter how hard or loud you tell him. We cannot fault a man for being blind and demand him to see. We can only pray that Jesus would give him sight and thank Jesus for healing our own blindness.

When I remember the grace that brought me to the cross, I respond with compassion. When I am focused on my confidence in my theology, I respond with indignation. The former is better. Engaging people where they are and pointing them to Jesus is our great commission and joy and is part of what it means to be missional. It is the practical outworking of worshiping our God and wanting more people to worship him.

The second half of that equation—proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ in word and action—is the response to the gospel in practice. This is the practical and tangible extension of grace to our neighbors as a reflection of the grace we have received. Because God has so loved us, we are free to love others.<sup>10</sup> Jesus rebukes religious people who see the culture's needs and do nothing to meet them.<sup>11</sup> Too often, the people of God justify ignoring the needs of others. We offer our sympathy and prayers, but we don't actually pray nor do we try to help. We assume it is someone else's responsibility. Others just pretend

the problems don't exist. We hide behind ignorance. We don't know what the needs are in our community because we don't want to know.

As a missional church being reconciled to God and to one another, we are a missional people who get to practically love others. We do this not just by supporting programs but also by looking people in the eyes and being their friends. James tells us that faith without works is dead.<sup>12</sup> He calls us to be doers and not merely hearers.<sup>13</sup> He says that true religion cares for widows and orphans.<sup>14</sup>

We cannot believe the gospel without being moved to action by it. If we believe that Jesus is the light of the world, if we believe that he and he alone is worthy of worship, then we will be compelled to join in with God on mission. Jesus says the two greatest commandments are to love God and love our neighbor. If we are not concerned with advancing the kingdom of God by sharing the gospel through our lives, then we don't love either.

As we see that the mission of God must be worked out in proclamation and practice, we begin to grasp what it means to be missional beyond cool shirts and hip hair. The essence of mission is the compassionate heart of God. When our hearts beat in rhythm with his, we begin to see his mission and are ready to take ownership of it.

### IT'S A RENTAL

The technical definition of ownership is to take possession of or to possess something. This is the framework that we will use for our definition of ownership. To own an ideology, vision, or mission is to take possession of it, to make it your own. It is to internalize it to the point where not only can you reiterate it, but also you can teach it, defend it, and live it.

It was a perfect day for the beach, and my new bride and I had the top down in a fun but gutless Mustang. My faith in the directions our host had given us was waning, but I was still having a good time. We had left the main track miles ago and were tearing down a dirt road riddled with potholes. There was a sign saying something about four-wheel drive a few clicks back, but I didn't bother getting the details. My wife began to get nervous about our adventure and asked if we

should be taking a Mustang on a road like this. Without hesitation, I uttered those three little words that put our minds at ease and that have been used by most of us at one time or another to justify the reckless disregard for vehicle degradation: "It's a rental."

It's amazing how differently we treat things that we own versus rent. Ownership gives us a sense of responsibility and care. It is ours, and in some way it reflects who we are, so we take care of it.

For several years I drove an old Buick Park Avenue that my wife and I had bought from her grandfather. It was hot beige with a beige interior. Not exactly the ride of choice for a young man, but it was mine. It was not nearly as nice as the gutless Mustang we rented on our honeymoon, yet I treated it much better. My treatment of a car reflects my level of ownership more than it reflects the value of the car itself.

In the same way, when it comes to the mission of the church, our responses reflect our ownership more than any other aspect of the mission. Our churches may have a clear, innovative, Holy Spirit-inspired vision for how God is calling us to proclaim his kingdom,<sup>15</sup> but if we collectively have no ownership of that mission, we will be hard pressed to achieve anything. God is not limited in accomplishing his plans by our lack of ownership, but he has chosen, for his glory and our joy, to employ us in his work, and I don't want to miss out on that.

Now, if owning a car makes you more careful when driving it, owning an idea makes you more passionate when sharing it. To test this theory, go to your favorite coffee shop or pancake house and offer your opinion on the most recent presidential election. You will soon discover who owns the vision and ideologies that each candidate represented. You will also get a pretty clear idea of who was not impressed with either candidate, at least not to the point of owning their ideals.

The folks who own the vision of their candidate can articulate it well and are intent on convincing others of the merits of their position. They may have attended rallies and bought bumper stickers and undoubtedly had a lawn sign. Ownership and passion for those ideals

drove them to live differently, to join the cause. Those who did not own the vision of any particular candidate will most likely finish eating their pancakes. They couldn't care less and probably will not have a strong opinion until they are personally affected, in a positive or negative manner, by those ideas. They don't own them and therefore have no passion for them.

The same principle applies to your ownership of the mission within the church. Ownership inspires passion and leads to action. Yet, for the Christian, ownership does not come from believing in a good idea but from faith in the good news. Our ability to own comes from the fact that we *are owned* by Christ.<sup>16</sup> We inherit ownership from our Father. Thus, we don't need to manufacture ownership as much as we need to awaken the church to the reality that this is our mission. We are agents of the king.<sup>17</sup> It is already ours; we need only to exercise that ownership.

So what is the mission of your church? Can you articulate it? Does it instill passion in you that causes you to live your life differently? How about the rest of your church? Do your church members display passion and ownership of the mission, or do they finish their pancakes?

### SATURATED OWNERSHIP

My wife and I have owned two homes in our life. The first thing we do when we buy a home is paint. And just to be clear, when I say "we" paint, I generally mean that she picks out the colors and I paint. This ritual is a way for us to make the house our own. There is no law that makes us paint the house or take care of it. Rather, this is our response to ownership. Because I own it, it's my responsibility to maintain it and improve it toward some semblance of its intended glory.

In contrast, I have never painted an apartment. It is not mine. When something breaks, it is the landlord's responsibility to fix it. This is a picture of many of our churches today. Leaders have become landlords of a rented mission.

I have observed, even in the most articulate and missional churches, a disparity in ownership of the mission between the



leadership of the church and the church itself. While leaders of the church may be passionate and driven toward the goals set out by their mission, they often face a congregation that is passive or even apathetic. The church lacks ownership. They have not internalized the mission to the point of it becoming their own. You could say that they haven't painted the walls.

If we want to accomplish the mission of the church, then we need to get brushes in every hand. We need to make sure that ownership does not reside only in the elders and pastors of the church, but is instead shared by every member. Ownership needs to permeate every fiber of the church as a sponge that is saturated with water. No matter where you touch it, the sponge releases a flood of power. When the church is saturated in the mission of God, from the preacher to the janitor, the mission overflows out of everywhere. Lives are changed through the witness of the church because no matter who you encounter, a flood of the gospel is released. Don't just tell your church what to do; remind them of who they are and what Christ has done. Inspire them to take ownership of the mission that God has graciously given to them.

#### AGREEMENT VS. OWNERSHIP

So when you think about your church, is it the church you attend or is it *your* church? Let me challenge you with what may not be an obvious statement. Agreement does not equal ownership. "I like what you are doing" is dramatically different than "I believe in what *we* are doing."

When I suggested earlier that the church does not own the mission, I am not saying that they disagree with it. Agreement simply means that people like the idea of the mission and are excited about someone at the church carrying it out. They may not, and probably don't, see themselves as the church, or at least not the part of the church that lives out the mission. This manifests in casual attendance and participation in programs and events that serve their needs but don't require anything of them. Agreement can even involve serving in various ministries if the bar is low enough; but if the mission is not owned, if it is not internalized within the people, then they will not

take risks for the sake of the gospel. They won't risk comfort, time, money, or self-interest for the mission to see Jesus glorified.

Our churches are filled with people who agree with the mission but do not own it. Ownership is marked by joy-filled sacrifice that sees kingdom work as a "get to" because of what Christ has done, rather than a "got to" out of Christian duty. Ownership looks like people serving the church and the city with a passion for the gospel. It looks like people cheerfully and sacrificially giving out of love for Jesus to see the work of the gospel move forward. Ownership looks like people participating in the messiness of community and being inconvenienced for the sake of another's sanctification. If you want to test your church's ownership level, check these three markers:

1. How many people serve? Do we consistently lack volunteers in children's ministry, hospitality, and other service areas?
2. How many people give to the church? What percentage of our attendance actually contributes financially to the gospel's advancing?
3. How many people are committed in community? Do we have a culture that lives out its faith together?

The data you find can be discouraging, but we need to be honest about the level of ownership within our churches if we want to correct the problem and lead our churches to health.

Addressing the issue of ownership won't guarantee missional community. But when coupled with hearts moved by the grace of God, the gospel becomes preeminent in our lives and motivations. We will sacrifice the nonessentials for the sake of the mission. Identifying areas where we lack ownership exposes heart failure and gospel distortions. By speaking the gospel to one another, we will be reminded of the love God has poured out on us, and we can call one another to the mission for the sake of the gospel and the glory of Christ.

A great illustration of this concept is in the movie *Miracle*.<sup>18</sup> Coach Herb Brooks is putting together the US Olympic hockey team from a group of college players. Molding these rivals into a single team proves to be a challenge as each player still identifies himself with his college team. Coach Brooks makes this point by asking each

player his name and for whom he plays. The answer from one player is, "Rob McClanahan. St. Paul, Minnesota." Asked who he plays for, the response is, "I play for you, here at the U." He asks the same question of a few other players, and after they all miss the point, he sends them to the line to skate sprints.

This issue persists through their ups and downs until the movie builds to the climax. As the team is preparing to face the impossible task of defeating the Russian juggernaut, the light turns on for one of the players. The exchange goes like this:

Mike Eruzione: "Mike Eruzione! Winthrop, Massachusetts!"

Herb Brooks: "Who do you play for?"

Mike Eruzione: "I play for the United States of America!"

In this instant everything changed. This was the moment that ownership for the mission took place. Mike was no longer just agreeing with the mission to win a gold medal for the United States; he now owned it. He wasn't borrowing it from Coach Brooks anymore.

I long for the day when the light goes on for the members of our churches, when we realize that we get to participate in the mission of God, and when we stop borrowing and start owning the mission for ourselves. As disciples of Christ, we are too easily content with agreement in our own lives and the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's call one another to ownership and see how that changes everything.

### INSPIRING OWNERSHIP

So how do we inspire ownership? I have been chasing the answer to this question since I began leading community groups. I have had some success, but I have also made plenty of mistakes in this area. I have rebuked people for their lack of passion, and I have encouraged people just to take baby steps. I have appealed to my leaders' sense of duty and have stoked their competitive fires. I have set goals and objectives and have put accountability structures in place. And in the end, each of these tactics had differing measures of success but very little sustainability.

What went wrong? It was like trying to inspire a painter with a tube of paint. It is not the paint that is inspiring—it is the sunset.

If you want to inspire people to the mission of God, you must lift up the Son. When we grasp the glory of Jesus, it becomes the sustaining inspiration that transforms life. Isaiah was inspired by seeing Jesus in the temple.<sup>19</sup> Peter was inspired by seeing Jesus after his resurrection.<sup>20</sup> Paul was inspired when he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus.<sup>21</sup> These men were changed when they saw the glory of Jesus. His mission became their mission. His glory was enough to change everything.

Our apathy toward the mission of God is not because of a lack of knowing what to do. It is our blindness to his glory and grace that keeps us satisfied with nominal Christianity. If you want to light a fire under your church for the mission, don't simply trot out your goals; lift up Jesus. When we see him in his power and are overcome by his love, we are joyfully compelled to respond to his call to make disciples. We are energized to reach the lost and help the weak. We are inspired to worship and to call the lost to his feet.

Peter reminds us in his first letter that we are people called to the mission of God to worship Jesus and to see people know and worship him.<sup>22</sup> Because Jesus has redeemed us and reconciled us to the Father, we get to live in such a way that shows his great mercy and grace. His love is inspiration enough for us to live lives that reflect the goodness and mercy of God and ultimately to draw people to Christ: that "they may see your good deeds and glorify God."<sup>23</sup> We will draw this out in later chapters, but notice here that the purpose of living honorable lives is to draw people to worship God. Obedience motivated by law or fear is religion. Obedience inspired by love is missional.

### PROFIT SHARING

Now let's look at some things that encourage ownership. First, when we give people the opportunity to participate in the mission, ownership increases. Consider, for example, how profit sharing motivates a corporation's employees. Employees who get to share in the company's profits are motivated to produce more and reduce cost. For

any for-profit company, profit is the mission; by sharing profits, they invite their employees to own the mission.

One profit-sharing employee told me how he and his officemates would share one stapler and reuse misprinted paper by turning it over and making a recycled notepad. If they saw a coworker being wasteful, they confronted the coworker with "encouragement" to find more efficient ways to work. How profound! The company was self-regulating. The boss didn't have to micromanage the floor because employees took ownership and inspired ownership in their coworkers.

Now imagine if we could do that in the church. It should be pretty easy. Our "product" is much better. The "profit," the exaltation of Jesus, is more fulfilling. And the self-regulation, loving one another, is significantly more enjoyable.

When we challenge the body (community groups) to contextualize their groups and engage their culture to reach the lost, we share with them the joy of the ministry. We give them the opportunity to see the Holy Spirit transform lives and save people. That is worth sharing a stapler for. When we share in the work and joy of ministry, we will begin to sacrifice and take risks for the gospel. We will live differently to increase the "profits," the redeemed lives of our cities.

#### PROGRAM ERROR

Unfortunately, overprogramming often smothers the opportunity for profit sharing. It kills ownership. I cannot stand the consumer mentality in the church today, and I am sure we all can agree on this point. It is just too bad that we created it.

I know that we like to think this mentality in the church is some infection that we caught while bearing our crosses in the world. But let us be frank for a moment—how could our church not have a consumer mentality? We expect very little from the disciples of Jesus in our body. When someone is depressed, we send them to a church counselor. When our children need to learn about Jesus, we send them to Sunday school. When someone wants to grow in Christ, we sign him or her up for a mentor program. When I cannot pay my rent,

I submit a benevolence request. If I want someone to hear the gospel, I invite them to Sunday service.

You get where I am going. We have so programmed the church to function as a well-oiled machine that we leave no room for Christians to be Christians. Are not these the functions of the church, as in the people of God, rather than the church, the institution? Seriously, what is left for the disciple of Christ to do? As Hirsch points out, "We have created passivity through the way we have done church."<sup>24</sup> We think we are helping by providing every imaginable service, but instead we are robbing the church of the joy of living out their faith and imaging God through encouragement, prayer, generosity, and witness.

Most celebrities spend their whole lives wanting attention and then complain they can't go to the grocery store. We spend our whole lives creating ministries to serve people and then complain that they want to be served. What if we took a different approach? What if we expected the church to love and serve one another rather than doing it all for them?

At the end of the day, people like to be needed. If we do not use a part of our body, it atrophies and becomes useless. In some cases it can even die. As Paul says, we cannot say that we do not need any part of our body.<sup>25</sup> When we do, it hurts the whole church. In light of this, we need to be strategic about the programs we offer and consider how they are helping or hindering our people from being disciples. Not all programs are bad, but every program either helps or hinders ownership. Therefore, we need to be wise about what opportunities we take from the body when we meet needs that could be met in community.

#### LEADING FROM THE EDGE

Another way to foster ownership is to allow people to lead from the edge. The idea is simply that you allow your people on the front lines to make decisions instead of the decision always coming from the top.<sup>26</sup> Like profit sharing, this instills ownership. By giving people more responsibility, they take more ownership of the quality and product. On the one hand, if a worker is asked to merely follow orders, he is less apt to care about the final product as long as his

check clears. On the other hand, when we give people responsibility and freedom to develop the best product, they create better ways to do their jobs and innovate to increase profits.

When I worked as a project manager for a structural engineering firm, my job was to design the building and come in under budget. How I accomplished that was up to me. It was a lot of responsibility, but I also had the freedom to succeed. In order to reduce cost while still providing a quality design, I wrote programs, designed spreadsheets, and developed processes to work faster and more precisely. I researched new programs to increase productivity. I innovated because I owned the mission to design the best building for the lowest cost.

Think what could happen if we built our community groups with the freedom to contextualize and express community in whatever way best reaches the individual neighborhood of that group, taking the gospel into "every sphere and domain of society."<sup>27</sup> What unique expressions of community could be possible if we entrusted our church with the mission?

#### RAISING EXPECTATIONS

Ownership also increases when we raise expectations. It is time to swim upstream when it comes to expectations, especially in regard to leadership. When it comes to community group leader recruitment and development, a popular philosophy that propagates in the small group world is that anyone with a pulse can lead a community group. Now, on one hand, I understand the roots of this philosophy. Developing a thriving small group ministry is difficult, and finding leaders is a consistent pain point in most small group ministries. In order to address the lack of leaders, we lower the expectations in hopes of recruiting lower-hanging fruit. We build turnkey programs that require little from a leader except reading questions from a sheet of paper. This is another example of how we rob people of ownership. Expect little and you will get exactly what you expected.

Groups led by leaders who do not own the mission are at best

social gatherings and at worst stagnant pools of pop therapy and gossip. Even when we take the best of these possible outcomes, we have to face the reality that there are plenty of alternative sources for social interaction that are better than a poorly led group. The fact is, when we lower the expectations for the leaders, we lower the expectations for our groups. At some point, you are merely organizing people into measurable units for purposes of management, and they have little spiritual value. This does not inspire ownership, and it certainly does not give life.

Alternatively, when we raise expectations, God's people have a way of rising to the occasion—not by their bootstraps, but by a renewed sense of dependence on the Spirit. As we are stretched beyond our capacities, we realize that we cannot do what God has called us to unless we abide in Jesus and trust him to use us for his glory. Call your leaders to live like this, and you will create a culture of Holy Spirit-dependent believers who accomplish more for the kingdom than they ever thought possible.

As we have raised the expectations for community groups and leaders at Mars Hill, we have seen a dramatic effect. The community group ministry was transformed into a fertile field for missional activity and leadership development. Once marked by contentment and management, we started to see men rise up to become pastors and church planters. As they leaned into the Spirit, their passion for the gospel and willingness to walk in faith increased tremendously. Instead of being content with agreeing with the mission of the church, they have taken ownership and trust that God can use them to advance the gospel. Baristas, engineers, programmers, contractors, architects, and others have taken ownership of the mission and have become pastors leading God's people.

As the priesthood of believers indwelt with the Holy Spirit, we all have the opportunity to participate in God's redemptive plan for our blocks, our neighborhoods, and our cities. Because our identities are secure in Christ, we can live with boldness for Jesus. And as we live in faith on mission for him, we can trust that he will be with us for every step.<sup>28</sup>



That is a picture of a community group that will be a source of life. It will be a place of discipleship, worship, and mission. When leaders take ownership, they inspire those around them, resulting in community groups who worship Jesus, love one another, and participate in the mission of God. There are no alternatives to community that can breathe that kind of life into your soul.

#### BITE-SIZED MISSION

Finally, to inspire ownership, you must also cast a vision that is accessible. Even churches that see themselves as missional often alienate the body by casting a vision that is out of reach for the average member. That is not to say that we should not have a God-sized vision. Rather, we must learn to communicate the vision and mission in clear terms that inspire and invite the entire church into participation. This starts with believing the foundational principles that we established in the first two chapters and then providing opportunities for everyone to participate in the mission.

For example, if God has called you to transform your city, consider how the average member will understand his or her role in that mission. If I don't have a microphone, a radio show, a blog, or a website, how am I going to affect the entire city? A vision too big to grasp at the individual level can leave the church feeling insignificant in the mission of God. We steal the joy of our people when they have no opportunity to own the mission and to image Jesus.

Again, transforming your city is a fine vision. It just needs to be broken down into bite-sized pieces so that everyone understands how participation contributes to this greater goal. (We will discuss how we do this at Mars Hill in chapter 5.) When you are casting vision, think bite sized. Articulate the greater vision and then break it down so that it is accessible to everyone. God has made us all parts of one body for the purpose of giving him glory through the exaltation of Jesus. Helping people to see their parts in such a great mission will inspire ownership in the mission. Ownership will in turn inspire innovation and creativity and make the vision God has given your church achievable.

#### COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

If we want to be a missional church that sees the lives in our cities transformed by the gospel, we must foster a holy discontentment with the status quo and resist apathy toward God's mission. Compelled by the grace of God manifested in the atoning work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection, we can take ownership of proclaiming the truth of the gospel and living it out in community.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.<sup>29</sup>

Community groups offer us the most tangible opportunity to call people to the mission of God. If we can inspire the communities of believers in our churches to own the mission to see Jesus's name exalted, then we can make a lasting impact for the kingdom of God. Hirsch makes the observation that every revival in history has been a recovery of the "people of God being the people of God."<sup>30</sup> It is a reawakening of who we are in Christ and taking ownership of his mission. Give your people opportunities to be the most palpable expression of the gospel within the church. When we ourselves are transformed by the gospel, we will believe it, live it, and own it.