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VINTAGE CHURCH

TIMELESS TRUTHS *and* TIMELY METHODS

STUDY GUIDE

MARK DRISCOLL & GERRY BRESHEARS

■ ■ CROSSWAY WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods: Study Guide

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

We hope to serve you well. When we began working on the manuscript for *Vintage Church*, our intentions were simple. We wanted to help your church and its ministry to be as faithful to Scripture and fruitful in culture as possible. Why? Because we love you, we love your church, and we love the people in your church.

We are not naïve enough to believe that you and the leaders in your ministry will agree with everything we have written. So we humbly request that you think carefully about why you disagree and then focus your energies on areas in the *Vintage Church* book that could be of service to you. To aid in that task, we have compiled this study guide and corresponding video discussion starters on your *Vintage Church* DVD to help guide discussions among the leaders in your ministry regarding what God would have you celebrate, repent of, improve upon, and grow through.

Our prayerful hope is that as you discuss the material in *Vintage Church*, God will spark transformation in your church. As your leaders discuss the main ideas explored in each chapter, we encourage you to not remain in the realm of the theoretical, hypothetical, or philosophical. Rather, labor to focus your discussions on the practical implementation of those aspects you believe will be helpful in the life of your church.

Even the best churches can be better. Even the healthiest churches can be healthier. And even the worst churches can, by God's grace and the Holy Spirit's power, experience the same newness of life corporately that God grants his people individually. Because Jesus is alive, because the Holy Spirit has been poured out, because the gospel is the power of God, because the Scriptures are true, and because Jesus promised to build his church, there is ample reason for you to have an enthusiastically infectious hope for the ministry of your church. Please do not be yet another church that settles for surviving rather than striving for thriving. As elders in our churches (Mark at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington; and Gerry at Grace Community Church in Gresham,

Oregon), we are sympathetic to the troubles, triumphs, and trials of local church ministry and are having the same discussions with the leaders in our churches and working through the same issues as you are. So, thank you for allowing us to also contribute in some small way to the betterment of your church.

Lastly, throughout this study guide you will notice that we have intentionally kept things brief. This is because we did not want to burden you unnecessarily. Because the *Vintage Church* book is well footnoted with Scripture and other reference works, we did not want to duplicate our efforts here and unnecessarily waste your time that is best spent discussing and applying the principles we are sharing as God leads in your ministry.

Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears

PREFACE

Vintage Church is about the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus died and rose to reconcile sinners to God as Christians and to one another as the church. Jesus is the head over the church, the apostle who plants the church, the leader who builds the church, and the senior pastor who rules the church.

While on the earth, Jesus ministered as prophet, priest, and king. He sent the Holy Spirit to enable and empower Christians to continue his ministry on the earth. As prophet, Jesus preached and taught Scripture with authority and has now commissioned preachers filled with his Spirit to proclaim his Word. As priest, Jesus cares for people and deals with their sin compassionately and calls his people to join him in these ministries of mercy. As king, Jesus demonstrated his rule over creation through miracles while on the earth and today leads his people into all nations and cultures by the Holy Spirit and according to his Word.

The prophetic function of the church is to confess the truth of Scripture and contend for it against false teachers. The essential truths of biblical Christian faith must be declared, defined, and defended. The priestly, experiential nature of the church requires that the new life Jesus gives to his people be visible when the church both gathers and scatters with Jesus. The kingly function of the church is to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ into all the world, over which Jesus is the anointed king. Great imbalance and unhealthiness occur when any one of these aspects of the church is either neglected or overly emphasized at the expense of the others.

In both *Vintage Church* and this study guide, we seek to take what is best from various prophetic, priestly, and kingly Christian traditions and tribes in order to be faithful to all of Scripture without neglecting any part of Scripture.

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

Jesus came into history in the most humble manner. He was born roughly two thousand years ago in a barn to a poor, young virgin woman named Mary. *Incarnation* literally means “becoming flesh” and explains the coming of the second member of the Trinity into human history as the man Jesus Christ. Jesus was one person with two natures, human and divine, which Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians alike believe.

As God who became a man, Jesus came to fully identify with our humanity and serve as the mediator between us and God to deal with our sin problem and reconcile us back to God. The confession of Jesus as God come in the flesh is a biblical test of orthodoxy. Any person or group who compromises this ceases to be part of the church and is a false prophet.

Jesus lived his sinless life on the earth in large part by the power of the Holy Spirit. He lived as we must live—by the enabling power of God the Holy Spirit. By becoming a man, Jesus did not lose anything; rather, he added humanity to his divinity.

The empowerment of Jesus through God the Holy Spirit is repeatedly stressed in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and given the title “Christ,” which means anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism. His ministry on the earth was done under the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the greatest missionary who ever lived or will ever live. His incarnation was in many ways a mission trip. First, Jesus came into a sinful culture. He came from the culture of heaven; his cross-cultural transition was starker than any missionary has ever experienced. Second, Jesus learned about a sinful culture firsthand, not from a careful and safe distance. Third, Jesus did not condone sin, nor did he himself sin. Finally, Jesus sent and sends Christians on the exact same mission. Christians are to be missionaries in culture as he was.

Jesus' mission took him to the cross where he died in our place, dealing with our sin. The church exalts the cross of Jesus and the things Jesus accomplished there when he died as our substitute, victor, redeemer, new-covenant sacrifice, justification, propitiation, expiation, ransom, example, reconciliation, and revelation. His sacrifice on the cross in its full biblical form is called *penal substitutionary atonement*. If the facet of Jesus as our substitute is omitted, or thought of as divine child abuse, or made the single theme, the gospel suffers. Apart from the gospel, the church does not exist and has no good news to tell.

Jesus' mission continued when he rose by the power of the Holy Spirit. This same power is given to the believer in Jesus, empowering new life and new ministry. Jesus gave the Great Commission, the continuing ministry of Jesus in his body, the church. Jesus then bestowed the Holy Spirit upon the church in Acts 2.

Acts 2 is widely appreciated by Christians as the record of the dawning of the new-covenant church. Jesus poured out his Spirit to begin and to commission the church—the community of Holy Spirit-regenerated and -empowered people who continue the ministry of Jesus.

Peter's sermon in Acts 2 summarizes the gospel, the power center of the mission of the church. The gospel breaks down into three aspects:

- 1) *Revelation: What God Did.* Jesus fulfilled the promises of a divine Messiah and died on the cross according to God's prophetic purposes. God raised Jesus from death and then exalted Jesus to the right hand of the Father and poured out the Spirit.
- 2) *Response: What We Do.* The first thing we are to do in response to God's revelation is repent, or change our mind about who God is. This is followed by a change of behavior flowing out of our new internal change of values. The second response is to accept the revealed message about Jesus by Spirit-empowered faith. Baptism is the visible expression of our connection with the death and resurrection of Jesus through repentance and faith.
- 3) *Results: What God Gives.* First, God gives us the forgiveness of our sins because of the propitiatory death of Jesus. This justification, or imputed righteousness, is our full legal and relational acceptance as God's children. God's second gift to us is the Holy Spirit and the new heart and new life of Christ. This regeneration, or

the imparted righteousness of Jesus, is for living a new life as a Christian with, like, for, to, and by the living Jesus. The third gift is membership in the body of Christ, the supernatural community of the Spirit. The fourth is participation in the redemptive mission to the whole world.

Tragically, many Christians have lost the understanding of the new life of the Spirit. They do not preach or live the regeneration of believers. Rather than living out a joy-filled life flowing from their deepest desire to be like Jesus, they settle for being sinners saved by grace, obligated to do all they can to keep the law of God by duty rather than by delight.

Subsequently, they have not fully enjoyed the double gift of imputed righteousness, which accompanies our justification, and the imparted righteousness of the indwelling Spirit, which accompanies our new heart and regeneration. On the cross God did a work for us by saving us through the death of Jesus in our place for our sins. We then see at Pentecost that God does a work in us through the Holy Spirit in our hearts for our regeneration. Together, both our eternity and every step along the way can be filled with hope, joy, purpose, and passion if we see the relationship between the cross and Pentecost. The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is the source of the Christian life and the Christian church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 1

- 1) Have you spent much time considering the fact that Jesus Christ came as a missionary? In what ways was Jesus a missionary? What are two ways in which you can join his mission?

- 2) What does it mean to be Spirit-filled? As a group, look for examples of Christ being Spirit-filled in the book of Luke. Look in the rest of the New Testament for examples of how this empowerment comes to us individually and in the body of Christ.

