

Why We Are In Utah - our journey here and vision for the future

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On April 3, 1988 I wrote my first journal entry. I was 17. It was on Easter Sunday. That morning, I had attended a dramatic presentation of the story of Jesus and it deeply impacted me. So much so that I began my journal that day. The church that took place in was called Valley Assembly of God. Today, that church is called Life Church Utah.

I had no idea that Valley had impacted me like that until Shellie and I began praying for wisdom concerning an open door to lead the church almost 30 years later, to the day. In searching my journal, I found that crossover moment that propelled my spiritual life in 1988. Prior to finding that journal entry, however, a verse from Isaiah deeply challenged me:

The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. (Isaiah 37:31 HCSB)

God was challenging me to step into the 'roots downward' as we return to Salt Lake City, so that the deep roots will produce 'fruit upward.' I felt in my heart that God was returning me to Salt Lake to complete what I had never seen in my own life, I never thought I would come back here!

The leap to Utah is huge for many people. For me, it really was a no brainer. No stigma for me to return to my roots.

At Life Church, **We are called to lead the people of the Valley to be more like Jesus.** And we take this seriously. Because we believe that Jesus is the one who transforms lives, we want to be like him. So how do we do this? We do this through a deep commitment to **biblical truth**, by **intentionally loving** others, and being **radically generous**.

I sense within my heart that the challenges for Life Church Utah are not over quite yet. There is a sifting that happening across churches, ours included. I also sense that staying faithful to what God has called me to (roots deeper, fruit higher) will be what grounds us to a future that is blessed and guided by God.

Concerning some specifics:

DISCIPLESHIP - without discipleship, we are not actually doing what the church is supposed to do. For Life Church Utah, discipleship is:

Trust and transformation. Jesus said to his disciples - if anyone want to follow me, they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. There are two

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aspects to trust and transformation - internal and external. Internal trust leads to spiritual growth. External trust is how we actually live our lives publicly - through serving and staying on mission in partnership with Christ. For transformation, internal transformation are the aspects of our lives in which we deny ourselves, things we 'take off' in order to reveal our transformation. The external aspects of transformation is the taking up of our cross, the things we 'put on' that look like Christ. Ultimately, all of this revolves around the Lordship of Christ!

LEADERSHIP - I believe that leadership for our vision is 5-fold

- Leadership of self
- Leadership of family
- Leadership in vocation
- Leadership in community
- Leadership of leaders

These five areas will form the backbone of our leadership development initiatives. While still in the infant stage, they are beginning to take shape.

Shellie and I are committed to being here at Life Church through the end of our ministry 'careers'. In about 12 years, we will begin work toward a transition that will take place when I am around 67 years, setting the church up for further success in stepping boldly into new vision that will be supported by me as the former lead pastor of Life Church Utah.