

SEEKING GOD

with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

SEEKING GROWTH

into closeness and conformity with Christ by the Holy Spirit.

SEEKING GOOD

for our neighbours through service and the gospel.

A culture statement for FLEFC

We believe that the Great Commandments (Matthew 22:36-40) and Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) summarize Jesus's purpose for his disciples. There are many different ways that this discipleship purpose can be (and has been) expressed in different church and ministry contexts. "Seeking God...Seeking Growth...Seeking Good" is an attempt at a sharp statement that clarifies how we at FLEFC live out the central aspects of discipleship expressed in these commandments/commission: loving God with the entirety of our being, living and growing as disciples, and making disciples through love and the gospel.

Some of this language of seeking God, seeking growth and seeking the good of others emerged from FLEFC's Encounter Nights a couple years ago. That season of listening to God strengthened the conviction of those participating that God desires (i) that we don't relegate our seeking of God to that season, (ii) that we are a church that equips each other to grow as disciples, and (iii) that we seek to have an impact on our community through service and the gospel. This statement has continued to be shaped through pastoral conversation in FLEFC's transition season.

On "SEEKING"

Scripture often uses the language of seeking to express God's desires for and promises to his people:

Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually! **1 Chronicles 16:11**

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. **Isaiah 55:6**

Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor, but evil comes to him who searches for it. **Proverbs 27:11**

But seek the welfare (good, *shalom*) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. **Jeremiah 29:7**

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. **Jeremiah 29:13**

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **Matthew 6:33**

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **Matthew 7:7**

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. **1 Thessalonians 5:15**

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. **Hebrews 11:6**

The biblical words used for *seeking* carry the ideas of:

- Activity: Seeking is *active*. It's something you *do*.
- Expectancy: You seek with the hope and expectation of finding
- Desire: Biblical seeking reflects a want and desire for the object of that seeking

Why not "loving?" The Great Commandments tell us to *love* God and our neighbours. So using *seeking* language might be seen as replacing the biblical language. Instead of thinking in terms of *replacement*, think of the culture statement as a more *practical expression of living out* what it means to love God and others. The term seeking is inherently more active than the term loving can be perceived to be. One can respond to the statement to love God by saying "I do," but the call to seek God (or growth or good) prompts the questions "Am I doing that?" and "How am I doing that?"

SEEKING GOD with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength

This is our response to the greatest commandment and it reflects other exhortations in the Bible to seek God with all that we are.

We can be prone... to interpret these words very basically as emotions, spirit, body, and intellect. However, even the shortest study on these terms tells us it isn't so easy. Some say these terms are not intended to divvy up human nature into neat categories. Others think they overlap like circles on a Venn diagram. Still others picture them as concentric circles with some more central and others on the edges. Few agree on psychological equivalents in human experience.

That's why I like how one writer puts it: God wants us to love and obey him with "everything we've got." (Bill Strom)

Seeking "with everything that we've got" includes growing in our biblical understanding (mind) and in an experience of the God who engages our deepest emotions (heart). It's a seeking that's lived out in our actions (strength). We seek with an attitude and posture of desire and expectation (soul).

SEEKING GROWTH into closeness and conformity with Christ by the Holy Spirit.

As disciples of Jesus, there is an unbreakable relationship between true closeness to him and true conformity with him. And our call to lifelong transformation into closeness and conformity with Jesus is only possible **by the Holy Spirit**, who guides, empowers and brings maturity in our discipleship.

Growth into conformity with Christ (becoming *more like Jesus*)

We are called to be imitators of Christ, walk the way Jesus walked, have his servant attitude, follow his example, and obey his commandments.

Growth into closeness with Christ (drawing *nearer to Jesus*)

Our relationship with Jesus is described with familial, love language. We are invited to draw near to God as He draws near to us, to abide in Jesus as he abides in us, and (as a church) to answer his knock on the door and invite him to commune with us.

SEEKING GOOD for our neighbours through service and the gospel.

The Bible tells us that God's love for people is expressed by us through two biblical "kinds" of good: the practice of *good works (service)* and the proclamation of the *Good News (the gospel)*.

Our good works shine for people in a way that can help lead them to glorify the God whose love and grace we are demonstrating to others.

The Good News is the means of identifying and addressing people's greatest need -eternal separation from God because of our sin. This Good News proclaims God's loving provision for this need- eternal and abundant life in relationship with God because of the Christ's sacrifice and resurrection.

Both the good news and good works are indispensable to biblical Christian witness.