

# Foundation-1: An Orientation

## *Session 4*

### **OUR DNA & OUR STRATAGEY**

We have covered lots of material to this point. We've looked at what we believe about being a member of a church family; the history of the URF; what God has done for us through our salvation; our beliefs on water baptism; baptism of the Holy Spirit; the Lord's Supper; and the URF's mission, vision, core beliefs, and core values, as well as what we believe about our Church. Wow, that's a lot, but it is all very important. Defining **Our Salvation** and **Our Statements** are foundational and necessary in understanding God's plans for the URF and the part you may play in our family. Now, building upon all that has been previously laid, let's continue as we consider **Our Strategy** – **How we fulfill our vision.** That is what Session 4 is all about. We are going to explore, in more detail, who we are and why we do what we do.

*“You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”* (Deuteronomy 8:2 NAS) **Remember** all the way which the Lord your God has led you...” In this scripture, we are encouraged to **remember how the Lord has led us.** He does that individually and as a church body. The URF is of exception.

If you would be able to consider all the history of the URF (see session 1) and all the details of that journey, you'd see there is an underlying plan or identity in what God has done and is doing in and through this fellowship. You might say that there is an overall identity or an essence of who we are. It could be referred to as our DNA. In science, DNA is often compared to a set of blueprints, recipe, or code, since it contains the instructions needed to construct other components of cells and carries the genetic information in the cell, making it capable of self-replication. So let's look at this blueprint, this recipe, this code, our genetic information, our DNA, that God has placed within the core of the URF. In so doing, we are clarifying our identity. By doing so, we will more fully understand our destiny. Again, this is true not only for a church, but also for an individual.

#### **The URF's DNA:**

1. Since its conception as a group of young people, the URF maintains a desire of reaching this generation with the relevant, transforming and powerful message of the Good News.
2. We are not exclusive in our approach to reaching the community, but desire to connect and work with the larger Christian community to make an impact.
3. There is a desire to be relevant as we relate with those in our fellowship and the community as evident in our style of worship and even in the design and function

of the building.

4. We are a family comprised of all ages, functioning as a family, desiring to reach and minister to the many needs and ages of its members.
5. Our multipurpose facilities are ever-changing, growing to meet the needs of an ever-changing, growing community of believers within the context of its location and culture.
6. We desire inspiring and relevant worship music. Worship continues to play an important role in our lives and gatherings.
7. We desire to have meaningful relationships within the church so that we not only attend services, but do life together.
8. We desire to be a people of prayer.
9. We desire to be a people full of the Holy Spirit, walking with and in God's power, and marked by transformed lives.
10. We desire to manifest all the gifts of the Spirit in our personal lives and when we gather as a congregation.

Having considered our DNA, how does this “genetic blueprint or code” define who we are today in **Our Strategy** and **Our Structure**?

## **OUR STRATEGY:**

What kind of church are we going to be? That is a strategy question. A strategy is a plan for action. The strategy comes first, then the action. The action is what we do, but the strategy defines why we do it.

Every church has a strategy behind it. Some are spoken, some are unspoken, some are effective, and some are ineffective. There are many types of strategies for churches. Some churches have the strategy to reach people who like solemn, orderly, dignified churches. Some churches have the strategy of real emotional, exciting churches. Some churches are real casual. Some are real formal. All these things have to do with strategy. They may be teaching the same thing about Jesus, but they have a different style. Churches have different styles. No church can appeal to everybody.

It's like a radio station. If we had a radio station that tried to appeal to everybody, who would they reach? One minute they play rock and roll, the next minute classical, the next minute easy listening, the next minute heavy metal, then a country western song, then a rap song, then a polka, then a hymn, then a marching band. What kind of audience would that radio station have? Probable very few.

Just like no radio station can appeal to everybody, no church can appeal to everybody. We're different. We all have different needs and different personalities – different identities.

So, what kind of strategy is the URF going to have? From the very beginning of the URF, it has never been our goal to get Christians to come from other churches to transfer and join our church. Though that has happened, it has never been our goal. Instead it's been our goal, our strategy, and our identity **to reach the pre-believer**

(again, we like that better than the non-believer). We have always wanted to reach those who have not encountered the incredible love of their heavenly Father in His Son Jesus Christ. It's like being a matchmaker. We know that God's love for all people is immeasurable. He already loves them; they may just not know that. We have the privilege of introducing them to God, Jesus and The Holy Spirit. We have always been about reaching people who have never really known the love of God and wanting them to begin living in His Kingdom. We are more interested in bringing them into the Kingdom rather than to church. The URF was started with a bunch of young kids wanting to reach their peers with a message and encounter God's love by presenting it to them in a language they could understand. That strategy has never changed.

Our other intentional strategy is that we want **to make disciples of Jesus Christ**. We want to see the people grow. We have always had a desire to create a place, a church family, where its members encounter the presence of a living God and are being changed more and more into His image. It's never been just about church membership; rather it's always been about Kingdom living. It never been just knowing about God, Jesus and The Holy Spirit, but it's always been about **knowing this incredible God** in all His fullness. In so doing, **growth** and **transformation** of the individual is inevitable.

We know our goal is not just for people to attend church. There is much more to it than just attendance. It's really about people coming to know God. But involvement in the Church is important and God's intent. We are designed to be connected to each other, to grow with the help of each other. Those of us who have experienced this fellowship-with-the-saints know how wonderful it can be (well, most of the time...).

If this is true, that we are created to know God and to live and grow together with other believers and that it can be such a good thing, then why do many not attend church? Why do so many not attend what we see as so valuable? What if we asked and got honest reasons for why they are not attending? It would be very interesting, informative and important.

Along with finding out why they do not attend church, what if we'd find out what they are looking for? In so doing, we'd probably discover that what the typical non-churched or pre-believer is looking for is not what the church offers. Or at least not what they think Church is offering. Remember, perception and reality are not the same things.

The following may offer some insight as to **why people may not want to attend or be involved in church**:

1. **Not Relevant** - Sermons are boring and they don't relate to my life. They might say, "Why should I go spend an hour of my time listening to something I can't relate to in my life?" It's important that we have practical messages that give people something on Sunday that is going to help people on Monday morning and throughout the rest of the week. Our desire is to give them a spiritual boost while they are with us, but something that will help them with their real life situations."

2. **Members are unfriendly to visitors** – When people come to our church, we

don't want them to feel like it's a club or a clique. They don't want to have a little sticker put on them that says, "I'm a visitor. Notice me. I'm different." They want to feel genuine warmth and friendliness, but not over-the-top attention. They may just want to blend into the crowd and watch everything, get their feet wet in a safe environment without being put on the spot.

3. **Church Services too long** – Life is just too busy and adding another thing on the schedule, especially if it seems irrelevant, is asking too much.

4. **Fear of the unknown or being uncomfortable** – People don't generally want to participate in something they feel might make them uncomfortable. Going someplace strange or new can be anxiety-producing, especially if you think you do not “measure-up” and don't know what to expect. If visitors should come, they do not want to be pointed out and may just want to come in and check things out. So we do just that, letting people kind of sneak in, yet feel welcome and fit in as they wish. They may want to sit toward the back and the edges so they can get out easily. That's natural. Or they may want, especially after some time, to move to the front and the center.

However, we do not want to make any apologies for who we are as we attempt to create a safe and friendly place here for visitors. Above all, we want everyone, visitors included, to experience the presence of God in the worship and the Word.

Now this is where it gets interesting. We have an intentional strategy to meet the needs of people at various stages of their relationship with God.

**What is our strategy?** You need to understand this so that we all understand why we do what we do. It's intentional. It is God-breathed. And we are just being obedient in carrying out His will in this local expression of His Body called the Upper Room Fellowship.

In understanding our strategy (and our structure), we need to answer these and other questions...

Why do we have and what are the differences in The Café and The Celebration?

Why don't we sing many hymns?

Why don't we use hymnals?

Why is the music the way it is with the instruments that we have?

Why don't we have an organ in the church?

Why do people lift their hands?

Why do some people dance?

Why do some people, other than the pastor, speak?

Why are there several pastors?

Why do people go toward the front for prayer at the end of a service?

There are lots of other questions a visitor (or a new member) may ask, but these kinds of questions are basically asking why we aren't more like the traditional church? The answers to all of those questions become crystal clear when you understand our strategy. Jesus said, I didn't come for the healthy in the world. I came for the sick. I

came *"To seek and to save that which is lost."* Our goal is to reach people who don't know Christ, to have them experience His presence, to know Him, be known by Him and fulfill the destiny that He has for them,

But how can we reach them?

Some suggestions: How about, while they are in the grocery store, we put a track on their window that says, "Come to church or go to hell!" That should work? Not!!!

How about this, they are home in the evening. The doors are closed and locked. They've turned on TV, perhaps Monday night football, and have just sat down to watch it with some popcorn and a drink. Let's send somebody to their house -- a stranger -- at night and knock on their door, right in the middle of this and have him say, "Come to church with a bunch of people you've never met before." Think that would work?

Are they going to listen to Christian radio? No way. Are they going to watch Christian TV? Probably not and if they do, they may not get a true picture of what God intends for his Body, the Church. Before they get any distorted ideas about Christianity, we would like to get their attention.

### **How is the pre-believer going to hear about Jesus?**

#### **1. Friendship evangelism:**

The best way for them to hear about Jesus is by somebody getting close to them and becoming their friend, and inviting them into your life and friends. We share our life-in-Jesus with others and in so doing share the life-of-Jesus with them. We'll talk about this more later.

#### **2. Invite them to a small group:**

If we are involved in a small group open to new members, we could invite them into this group and by so doing, love them into the Kingdom. This is one reason we believe and intentionally have small groups as part of our structure. In small groups, the Christian life can be made real to the pre-believer.

#### **3. Invite them to church:**

For that purpose, we have two formats of Sunday morning: The Café and The Celebration

#### **The Café:**

The Café is designed to present the Good News in an informal and relational atmosphere. It begins with some coffee, tea, donuts and talking with others as you walk around the room or sit at round tables. After a brief welcome, we sing about 3 worship songs led by a contemporary praise band. After that, a testimony and a brief message is given, after which people are encouraged to discuss the topics raised from the message, pray for needs or continue to fellowship around the table or throughout the room. It lasts for about 1hr and is an opportunity to bring someone into a non-threatening environment to experience God's presence, word, and love by being with

people in a café-like environment. It is designed for all levels of Christian maturity in mind, as well as the pre-believer that is ready to experience God in the company of others, but perhaps is not ready for the style of worship they might experience in the Celebration.

### **The Celebration:**

The Celebration is designed more with the believer in mind. However, we believe the pre-believer would be able to relate and be touched by God's presence and therefore greatly benefit from such an experience. It lasts for about 1½hr. It includes a longer, participatory, and celebratory worship style different from the Café. This is all part of the strategy. You will see a variety of expressions during worship. Some may sit quietly, some may clap or raise their hands, some may dance, and some may fly banners. The worship style may vary from extremely quiet and gentle to energetic. We encourage prophecy and occasionally hear speaking in tongues. There may also be times and opportunity for personal ministry. We'll have more on all these issues later. We want a place where the mature Christian can experience the fullness of God within the corporate gathering. These times of celebration are very important in the lives of the Christian. However, we think the pre-believer could also be positively affected by the incredible presence of God's Spirit as His children worship in spirit and in truth. We'll also have more on this topic later.

### **The URF Strategy – these principles make our church unique...**

**1. Mission and Vision driven.** Everything we do should fit into our mission and vision: We desire to make disciples of Jesus Christ who impact our community and world with the love of God and therefore, are identified as a church that Knows God – Shares Life – Serves Others.

**2. An attempt to reach the pre-believer.** We want to share the good news of Jesus with anyone God would bring our way, but especially the pre-believer. This could be done within any of our levels of structure: The Café, The Celebration, small groups, and friendship evangelism.

**3. Climate of Acceptance.** We don't expect people to be perfect. This is a church for people who may not have it all together, but want to grow and fulfill God's plans in their lives. This is a church for real people with real issues and problems. We offer acceptance of people without being judgmental of them. There's a difference between acceptance and approval. We can accept a person without approving of their lifestyle. Jesus did. Jesus accepted the woman who was caught in the act of adultery without approving of that. It was obviously wrong. But He accepted and loved her without approving of what she was doing. We can accept people who don't have it all together without necessarily approving of all the hang-ups they have.

**4. Transformation.** An intentional strategy towards personal growth and transformation is the main goal, not religion or church services. We'll explain this more little later, but we have designed a process that will help you grow to spiritual maturity, help you develop your spiritual talents and abilities and help you become successful in

your Christian walk. The goal of this church is not to build big buildings. The goal of this church is to make you successful in your life so that one day when you stand before God, He'll say, "*Well done thou good and faithful servant.*" Our goal is to help you know God, understand your identity in Him and fulfill the destiny He has for you.

**5. Multiple meeting opportunities.** We have designed different meeting formats so that a pre-believer and the believer may experience and eventually grow in Kingdom life. This would include opportunities to share life with others in a small group as well as opportunities to serve others.

**6. Relevant Preaching and Teaching.** The goal is to change your life, to help you become more like Christ. That's God's goal for your life – to help you become like Jesus Christ. The preaching and teaching is designed to aid in your growth

**7. Experiential Worship.** Worship is something we live rather than just do; however, when we gather in our meetings, our desire is to worship God in spirit and truth with the anticipation of experiencing his presence.

**8. Every Member a Minister.** Not every member is a pastor, but every member has a ministry. Ministry is serving others. Again, we are designed to know God, share life, and serve others. Serving in your ministry is extremely fulfilling and may lead to some serving beyond these facilities.

**9. Plural and Authentic Leadership.** We believe that you lead by serving. In this church, we don't have a single pastor but rather several pastors we call elders. The elders are authentic; they lead by serving and example. We provide for leadership development at many levels.

Many of the things we've discussed in this session will be expounded upon in upcoming groups and sessions. For now, let's personalize this material by way of some questions for reflection and eventual discussion.

## **FOUNDATIONS-1/4: LIFE APPLICATION:**

- 1. Identify some of the DNA of the URF.**
  
- 2. Do you agree with the list on page 3-4 on the reasons why some people may not want to come to church?**

3. Can you think of other reasons for not attending church in today's world?
4. Do you or did you relate to any of these excuses? How are we doing as a church in addressing them?
5. What is your story about coming to the URF? What were your first impressions? How have they changed?
6. How can we/you do a better job in reaching out to the pre-believer?
7. What is the URF Strategy?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
  - 6.
  - 7.
  - 8.
  - 9.
8. What is your response or reaction to seeing and knowing that strategy laid out? Do you understand it? Can you embrace it?
9. What is God saying to you in and during this material/time?