

SPIRITUAL STRATEGIC JOURNEY - WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Through God's power, building a community committed to Christ that lives out the Great Commandment and fulfills the Great Commission.

Where are we going? This perennial question is asked the moment our feet hit the doorstep. Children ask it when leaving the house, and church members ask it when embarking on a new initiative. The answer for our congregation is that **we are going where God sends us**. That's not satisfactory, of course. We want clearer answers. It's like a parent telling a child, "We're going where I take you, and that's all you need to know." But it isn't all we need to know, not really. We want to know the destination. Where is God sending us?

The early Christians struggled with the same question. They asked Jesus where they were going and he answered them, "I am the way." But the answer wasn't enough. They didn't just want to know *how to get there*; they wanted to know *where they were going*. We too question Jesus, asking for guidance, direction, and a plan of action. This questioning is prayer. And the initial answer will be the same. Jesus is the way. If we love the way Jesus loved, live the way he lived, serve the way he served, we will remain on the way God is sending us.

But the nagging question remains: on the way where? Simply saying "the kingdom of God" isn't enough. The kingdom of God seems far distant from the world we live in, and we want answers for the here and now.

Two statements by Jesus may give us a sense of direction. The first, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21, *NIV*). Sometimes we think of the kingdom as something located in the future. Jesus suggests that the promises of God are present with us *now*.

The second statement: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21, *NLT*). Because we have been given God's promises, we are sent to share them. We must recover an understanding of the church not so much as a group that is to be gathered, but as a people who have been scattered. We are the ones who have been sent.

God is sending us on a *spiritual* strategic journey to proclaim the good news of the coming kingdom. This means our strategy must be more than programs and three-year goals. Our church's mission must arise directly from our church's spiritual life.

Prayer enables us to discern our mission. When rooted in contemplation, the fruits of Christian action grow healthy and strong. Immersed in prayer, we are able to live, love and serve with Jesus wherever God sends us.

Whenever God demands great things of the faithful, God calls them first to pray. Prayer connects us with the abundant life available in Jesus. Prayer connects us with each other. When we gather in a small prayer group and pray aloud for one another, we realize true community by listening together for God's voice.

Through prayer we are able to share our stories of faith and life, frustration and sadness, hope and possibility. By sharing our experiences of life and prayer, our vision of Jesus will be clearer, as will our understanding of where God is sending us and what God expects of us here.

Your Share and Prayer Triplet is a covenant group. In it you are committing:

- to pray for each other and the church on a regular basis
- to meet together at your agreed upon times
- to continue with your group throughout the entire 100 days
- to be a safe prayer companion and to keep your private sharing confidential
- to have an open mind as you listen for God's voice and watch for God's leading

Are we there yet? No. Not completely. But in Jesus the kingdom is already here. Will we know everything we need to know about our calling at the end of these 100 days? No. But by the end of our time together, we will have a clearer sense of God's vision for our congregation. The elements of our future story will begin to emerge, and they will shape who we become and where we will go. May it be so. Amen.