

# The Vision of Thirty Something

Newton Life Group 16/2/2005

This document is intended to explore the vision of Thirty Something and to provoke discussion about what Thirty Something means and why it exists. Although it has been reviewed by some members of the Thirty Something leadership it does not represent the official vision but rather the attempt of the author (Peter Kelley) to clarify and understand what the vision means.

## Why Church?

In order to understand the vision of Thirty Something it is first necessary to understand a few things about the purpose of the church and of individual congregations:

- God created the church as His instrument to extend His kingdom and dominion over the earth.
- In the church the diversity of gifts that God has created can work together so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Our gifts can bless those that don't have them and other's gifts that we don't have can bless us.
- In the church we find community and relationship. God is a relational God and he intended us to experience relationships with one another. It is through community that we express and learn about the relationship we have with God.
- In the church we have the opportunity for accountability. On our own we can convince ourselves that our actions are OK or ignore the consequences of our sin. In a Christian community we have the opportunity for others, especially the God appointed leadership but also for friends, to speak into areas that we otherwise would ignore.
- In the church we can work together to establish God's kingdom in this earth. All of our gifts working together can affect the earth and roll back Satan's corruption to restore it to its created state by grace.

## What Needs Does Thirty Something Address?

The reason for the establishment of 30 Something was that the church was struggling to provide a connection point for one of the largest segments of our society: divorced people and older singles. The lack of connection caused many to leave the church or, if they stayed, they demonstrated faithfulness to the church but felt that they were not experiencing the deep joy from living out God's destiny for them.

To address this area and to extend the dominion of God's kingdom Thirty Something was established.

Why wasn't the church connecting?

- **Lack of Commonality** – Common experiences allow us to connect better with people. If the church doesn't demonstrate that it understands the experiences you are going through those people are going to find it difficult to connect to the church.
- **Isolation of Older Singles** – Older unmarried single people are often seen to have “failed” in the eyes of our society. Societal ideals of romantic relationship are so often reinforced in the media, movies, novels and magazines that anyone who doesn't fit the mold can be made to feel a failure. Sometimes the distorted image portrayed by society is felt, rightly or wrongly, by singles within the church. This is not what God thinks, quite the reverse. God's standard of success is defined by the extension of His kingdom through a life that is committed and submitted to Him and His

acceptance is unconditional.

- **Prejudice Against Divorcees** – One of the distinguishing features of the church against our society is the value placed on strong and successful marriages. When a couple gets married in the church there is such joy and expectation that this marriage is for life. In holding this ideal, which is a good one, there can be a tendency to feel less like connecting with those whose experience is so much less than the standard that is set up. People so often want to live the fairytale whereas divorce is ugly, messy and complicated and some in the church have found it easier to ignore the issues and the people concerned rather than deal with them. In extreme cases this can lead to condemnation and judgment of those who are divorced because they have failed to uphold the ideals the church has set forth<sup>1</sup>.
- **The Unlovely** – Some (note not all) people in the older single and divorced categories can require “extra grace” because of the affects of hurts and sin in their lives. Loving these people can be hard work and yet that is what we are called to do in Christ. Without a focus on this group it can be easy to ignore the people that are harder and concentrate on the people that are easier.

## **So What are the Values of Thirty Something?**

The motto of Thirty Something is “Understanding the goodness of God and being loved and accepted by others”:

### ***Understanding the Goodness of God***

- God loves us even knowing all of the things we have done. There is nothing that God can't forgive through Jesus.
- We are God's creation, loved by him. We are precious to Him, of great value.
- God loves us as we are. We don't have to measure up to a standard before He will love us.
- God wants to have a relationship with us, He delights in relating to us.
- God has a plan and a purpose for us. There is no-one left out.
- There is no hurt that has been thrown at us that cannot be healed by the power of the presence of God.
- There is nothing in our lives that God cannot overcome.
- God wants to display His glory in our lives because He has chosen us to be His ambassadors and instruments in extending His kingdom.
- God deserves our praise and our worship because of who He is.
- Jesus went through all of the things that we go through and more because He loves us. He understands our pain like no-one else can.

### ***Being Loved and Accepted by Others***

- God uses us as His instruments to love other people in the same way that He loves us.
- God gives us the same grace to love others that He uses to love us.
- God uses the experiences in our lives to create stronger bonds and connection points with those who are going through similar experiences.
- God uses our journey in Him to serve as an example to others of how a grace filled life looks in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this statement does not refer to any specific instance of this at Paradise Community Church although divorcees in other churches have sometimes experienced this.

- God uses our relationships with others to show us things that we otherwise wouldn't see in ourselves.
- God uses the love that others show us to show us things about His love.
- God uses the love that we show others in Him to show us things about His love.
- God uses our love for one another as a contrast to this world that leads people to Him.

## **Why Thirty Something?**

All of the values in the preceding section could be common to many parts of the church so why is a group like Thirty Something necessary? The answer lies in the ability of a group like Thirty Something to focus on particular needs and to be better at connecting with people who are single and single again. Because of its focus on ministry to the “single and single again” it can do the following:

- If you are single or single again then there are a number of people living lives in God's purpose that have been through what you are going through and know what your pain is. They have learned how to deal with the situation that you find yourself in and so can stand alongside you and model for you the life that God has.
- Here are people who are in a similar stage in life to you who have taken their focus off the situation that they find themselves in and put their focus onto God's purposes. They show what is possible in God's kingdom for you also.
- Here are people who are struggling with the same issues that you struggle with who you can encourage and who can encourage you.
- Here is a group that can take some of the most disadvantaged, hurt, broken, hopeless people in our society, show them the power of the grace of God so that they become so much more than the world, or even the church, thought possible. In doing this God's glory is displayed and God's kingdom is extended.
- Here is a place where all of those sermons on living the single life preached by those long married take on credibility and bite through the examples of those living out the benefits of singleness in the kingdom of God.
- Here is a place where those who are married can teach those who are single those truths which will limit the capacity for Satan to attack their relationships and marriages in the future.
- Here is a place where single parents can share with each other the particular trials of bringing up kids into the kingdom of God when one parent is absent.