

# Ark 15th Anniversary - 21.04.2024 - Pastor Stephen Eaves

## What Next?

### 1. Fifteen Going On Sixteen

Fifteen years is a good length of time! Fifteen according to Biblical numbers stands for 'rest'. I preached on the subject of 'rest' last year and I took a Sabbatical 'rest' for two months! All that was during our 15th year as a church... How appropriate!

Now, we are going into year 16. So what does 16 stand for?

16 is linked with 'love' and 'loving'

Love shown upwards towards God and outwards towards people

There are 16 attributes of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13

On the 16th occasion love is mentioned in 1 John, we read this:

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out all fear." (1 John 4:18)

In our 16th year as a church, God wants us to grow in love for him and for one another!

- Love that is active, visible and practical
- Love that is deep and spiritual, hidden and intimate

We are all called firstly and before anything else to be lovers and worshippers of God

### 2. Ark is not a building!

Who we are is far more important than where we meet together

This church is a people, a body, a living organism for God

There are hundreds of beautiful church buildings up and down this country

But God doesn't care about bricks and mortar as much as he cares about people!

We could meet anywhere: a community centre, a school, our meeting place does not define us

We are a people, a family, a community and we gather together because we love Jesus

God does not care about our building, he cares about our hearts!

Solomon built an incredible temple, but David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14)

What is the condition of your heart today? That is what he cares about

Have you given your life to him or are you waiting to see if you can find a better offer?

Just because you come along to a wonderful church, or call yourself a Christian isn't enough!

What is the condition of your heart?

Soften your heart and give your life to Jesus today - you will never regret that decision

### 2. Growth begins in the heart

The first thing you need in order to grow is a dream or a vision (Dr Yonggi Cho)

That dream must then be nurtured in your heart, pray until you believe in it

You must act like you believe it and behave like you believe it!

He began with a church of 5 people and God gave him a vision for 300

Prayer was key! He prayed for it and took hold of it by prayer, he was changed...

He began to walk and talk like the pastor of a church of 300

And within a few years he had a church of 500...

The Lord took him stage by stage in that way: fresh vision for more, then embracing and living in it

Pastor Yonggi Cho finally had the largest church in South Korea with 750,000 members

What vision has the Lord given to me and to Ark? A church of thousands? No

He has given me the vision for a church which is on fire for Jesus, passionate for him

A church that is filled with power of the Holy Spirit

Crowds of people don't matter to God.

He looks for people who will chase after him, who seek his face and not his hands!

If we want to growth we need to grow more leaders. A handful of leaders is not enough

Unfortunately, you can't plant seeds and wait for them to appear

We need ordinary people with a faith to take responsibility and willing to lead others

We want to help with that. We plan to establish a group to encourage emerging leaders

### 3. Come nearer for more!

We have offered times of 'soaking' many times here at Ark  
Time to sit or lay down with gentle music playing in the background  
No agenda, except to meet with God and allow him to minister and speak  
But people were too busy. People want to be doing, doing, doing  
God sometimes simply wants us to 'be'  
"Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)  
"He whispers so that we will draw nearer to listen" (Michael Koulianos, Jesus Image)

Ezekiel 47:1-9

In his vision, Ezekiel is taken by a man who shows him the Temple.  
He sees water coming out from the building, only a trickle...

**3** As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was **ankle-deep**. **4** He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was **knee-deep**. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was **up to the waist**. **5** He measured off another thousand, **but now it was a river** that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was **deep enough to swim** in – a river that **no one could cross**. **6** He asked me, 'Son of man, do you see this?' Then he led me back to the bank of the river. **7** When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. **8** He said to me, 'This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. **9** Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.

This is a picture of the life-giving water, the Holy Spirit, that comes from God  
We can settle for the trickle, be satisfied with a puddle or we can keep seeking more  
I want Ark to be filled with those who will press in for more, not those who are too busy to love  
There is always more to lay hold of, more to experience, more to encounter in God  
God wants you to keep going until you lose their footing and cannot walk anymore  
It seems frightening, but that's the place we need to reach  
The green trees and abundant creatures were not found in the trickle of water at the Temple  
It's when Ezekiel moves further away that the river begins to flow and life springs up  
It's in the outworking of our lives for Jesus that life in all its fullness springs up  
We must follow the flow of the Spirit to get to those places!

### 4. Reject the lies!

There is a saying "Stay in your lane"  
It means: stick to what you're good at and don't venture out into unknown territory  
The Lord is saying to us "No. Get out of your lane!"  
Your own lane is where you are comfortable, where you feel safe  
To get to where God wants us, we need to get out of our comfort zones!  
Do not be limited by what you've already seen or done. Step into what God has next for your life

There is another saying: "You're from the wrong side of the track"  
It means that you're from the wrong background, you're not good enough, even undesirable  
It makes you feel like there is a barrier in the way to your success  
Again, I feel the Lord declaring "No!"  
God chose you to come from the right place and you are exactly where God wants you to be  
You can cross over the track, even though that seems really dangerous!  
Will you believe that God has good plans for you, to prosper you and not harm you?  
"Let the weak say I am strong" (Joel 3:10)

We must all reject the limitations others would put upon us  
(Many people spoke negatively about our church when we started!)  
They hold us back and keep us from progressing in Christ  
The Lord declares that he is removing the boundaries others have set over you  
As a church we must remove the “small church” mindsets  
Instead we must lay hold of the “grand plan” that God has for our fellowship  
The Lord is speaking favour and advancement over us. We must receive it by faith

God can and wants to use you! Don't discount yourself and feel you are not good enough.  
Do not count yourself out! Count yourself in!  
Believe that he will equip you and enable you

Philippians 3:12-14

“I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me... forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.”