

Announcer ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to the Future Church Podcast, powered by Exponential, a podcast about innovative and emerging ideas in the North American church. With the need for the gospel in our generation, we must not look for a silver bullet approach. We believe there are many expressions to the local church and we are seeking to discover and highlight new and effective ways that churches can impact our world with the gospel. For more information about Exponential's resources and upcoming events, visit exponential.org.

Todd Wilson ([00:37](#)):

Hey, welcome to another edition of The Future Church Podcast. I'm Todd Wilson, the founder of Exponential. Today, I've got DJ Soto with me. Welcome, DJ.

DJ Soto ([00:46](#)):

Hey, thanks for having me, Todd. I appreciate it.

Todd Wilson ([00:48](#)):

Hey, this is one cool topic today, VR Church. So I'm thrilled to have you on with this. I have to tell you DJ, during your recent presentation in Austin, which is the first place I got to hear and see what you were doing, Dave Ferguson and I, who co-lead Exponential, we were sitting in the back of the room during your presentation and about halfway through the presentation, we both realized from what you were saying, that nothing would keep us from starting a VR Church like quickly kind of thing. In fact, we had this conversation about, "Why don't we just go ahead and start one together right now?" We almost crashed the stage. We were going to run up on stage and tell you, "We're both committing to VR Churches." And here's where the reality set in. Then we both said we probably better learn a little bit more about it before we commit to do something like that. So today is my chance with you to learn enough about this, to know whether it's even something plausible for me to do. How about that?

DJ Soto ([01:53](#)):

Yeah, sure. Absolutely. Yeah, I'll definitely dive into it.

Todd Wilson ([01:56](#)):

All right. Hey, we're going to go into some of your background and some of the history here, but I want to just jump into a few terms to begin with.

DJ Soto ([02:04](#)):

Sure.

Todd Wilson ([02:04](#)):

Let's assume that the average person listening doesn't know what some of these terms mean. So there's two things I'd like you to go ahead and address. Let's start with metaverse. I've had the benefit of reading your application and reading some of the stuff you've written and you talk about the metaverse. So give us update on what is the metaverse?

DJ Soto ([02:25](#)):

Yeah, there's a lot of definitions around it. People define it differently, but fundamentally, if we can... Maybe this is an oversimplification, the metaverse is these virtual reality digital universes that exists online. And what's unique about these is that people completely can live their lives in there, but not from a detached from their physical way, but I'm talking about like there's communities, there's economies, there's governments, there's the... The sun rises and falls on these universe as they continues to be. So for example, one of our churches that we've planted in the metaverse, excuse me, there's a community in there right now and they're engaging in economy and community and in games and building their homes. So that's the idea of collective virtual shared spaces, which is different than things that we've seen in the past.

DJ Soto ([03:22](#)):

So if I can give a little bit of specificity to it, someone might say, "Well, I've heard of Fortnite. Is that what you're talking about?" That's not exactly what we're talking about because a lot of these games or experiences, you come in for a quick match, you hang out with people for five, 10 minutes, and then you're out, and then you never see them again. But a lot of these metaverses, MMOs, virtual shared spaces, they come in and cultivate community. And whether it's just purely social, or maybe there's an economy or there's a game to be played. So this metaverse is coming, that's going to affect us beyond just gaming and into everything that we do. We see the blockchain developing, we see cryptocurrency coming and all these things are leading to this space where we are interacting with each other in an immersive virtual environment that never goes to sleep.

Todd Wilson ([04:12](#)):

So if I can just put it, I want to make sure I'm understanding and put it back in my own words. So the idea of doing an online game for a second, for some people, that's a way of escaping from real life into a game. In this case, you're talking about an online game is part of a bigger thing where someone is actually interacting and having community in the online space, and gaming might just be one expression of how they're interacting.

DJ Soto ([04:42](#)):

Correct. Correct.

Todd Wilson ([04:43](#)):

As opposed to the destination for why they're going online.

DJ Soto ([04:47](#)):

Correct. And the unique marker to that is the immersiveness of, let's say virtual reality, where you put on this VR headset, you're looking through these goggles, if you will, and you can turn left or right, look up or down, and you're in a new reality. A new reality has come over your eyes and replaced your current physical reality. So that's a new, and we've never seen that before. When I started VR in 2016, I thought I'd seen it all, technologically speaking. But when I experienced VR for the first time, I was blown away, couldn't believe what I was experiencing. I was meeting

people from all over the world in fully realized avatars, interacting with them, high fives, walking around, speaking that unique immersive technology is a critical marker to this whole conversation because someone might say, "Well, I go in and hang out in a game and it doesn't seem that's like maybe connecting."

DJ Soto ([05:39](#)):

But when you experience it in a VR type of way, it is at a different level of connection. And there's this real relationships, real community, and it's quite unique. Particularly in this COVID era as people are isolated and we're in our homes these days and I know that's fading to a certain degree, but that has seen the increase of virtual reality over the past year.

Todd Wilson ([06:04](#)):

So when you talk about the excitement or that you being blown away by being in the virtual reality environment, for somebody who's never worn a headset or been in the environment, just describe for a second, even the use of the headset and what the experience is.

DJ Soto ([06:20](#)):

Yeah. And if you don't mind, I'll go back to... Here's some movies to consider, like the Matrix, Inception. Steven Spielberg just came out with Ready Player One. All these movies reflect this, another world that you plug into. And that's the Hollywood idea of it, but it just sparks a picture in our minds, but at a logistical level, we take this VR headsets. It's like glasses. I know maybe this is a very smaller version. When you put the glasses on, now you're looking at... You're on a beach in Hawaii. You're in your apartment, but now you're on a skyscraper in Tokyo. And the quality of the technology that you hear all the time is that it feels real. And there is no shortage of YouTube videos of... You see people jumping or falling or getting scared because the dinosaur's coming at you.

DJ Soto ([07:09](#)):

So the VR technology, even at this infant stage, is so compelling that it's tricking the brain for you to think there's actually a dinosaur there, that I'm actually at the beach in Hawaii. So when you put it on and you look left, you see what's to your left. So it's not like a computer screen that you have in front of you. As soon as you turn your head, the screen stays there and you're looking at your dog in the corner. But with the VR, when you turn left, you start to see it just like in real life. Just as your eyes would gaze around, that's what you're experiencing in virtual reality. The sights, the sounds, and then the integration of other people makes it just the interaction at a different level. And yeah, it's a lot of fun and like I said, it's at the beginning of this technology. There is a lot that people are using it for.

DJ Soto ([07:58](#)):

It's not just social. People are learning how to do surgeries. There's all these trainings that are happening through virtual reality. And what we're discovering is the neurological impact of these experiences in VR, whether you're training to be a surgeon or you're a Walmart employee learning how to stock things is that it's imprinting at a different level. Training is happening at a whole other level. So now that we think about that and we take it to the ministry of the church, what are some impactful things that we can do with VR that would help us in our discipleship,

help us in our Bible knowledge? And those are some things I can speak to you later about how we're using that as well.

Todd Wilson ([08:35](#)):

Before we move on, let's say that you and I make a trip to Disney World and we're physically at Disney World. So we're walking down main street at Disney World. We can look left, look right. We see it. If we close our eyes, we hear the sounds of everything from birds to other people and so forth. Is it safe to say that the quality of virtual reality at this point, those two dimensions, the what I see and what I hear are pretty close to reality at that point? That we could do a similar thing with the VR headset on to walking down the street at Disney?

DJ Soto ([09:19](#)):

Yes. Yes. In some ways, yes and no. So on the no side, let's say can we build a full replica of Disney hyper photo realistic? Probably not at this point, but you can make a section of it and be put right in there and it'll look like you're at Epcot looking around and things. So it's only a matter of time before the tech grows, where there will be Disneyland in VR completely.

Todd Wilson ([09:44](#)):

But for right now, it's segments of it as opposed to the whole thing, but it's going to grow [inaudible 00:09:49]?

DJ Soto ([09:48](#)):

Correct. Yes.

Todd Wilson ([09:50](#)):

Okay.

DJ Soto ([09:51](#)):

Yeah. And when you experience that segment and your brain sees the possibility like, "Wow, I can't even imagine where this is going to go, because the little part of the universe I'm experiencing right now, this is blowing my mind." And creators are very creative about how they're developing for it. So, I mean, we're flying in the sky. We're flying in spaceships. We're having meetings on the moon. So the innovation is just beginning. It's just stirring up to how to use this technology

Todd Wilson ([10:19](#)):

Yeah. Now, how does it... I'm assuming if I go to some of the other senses, like smell and taste and touch, that's where it's harder to get to reality. Or tell me about those dimensions. If we're in that virtual reality of Disney World and I walk over to the wall on the building and I rub my hand against it, normally there's a texture. I'm assuming in virtual reality, if I go over and touch a wall, I'm not feeling the same sensation of texture?

DJ Soto ([10:51](#)):

Yes and no. So I have touch feedback controllers. Let's say you shake someone's hand. There may be a feedback or rumble feedback. So textures might not be is it rough or is it smooth? That might not be what you feel, but you would feel something. I've just interacted with an object in VR. I have feedback. The brain is registering that. So the eyes for sure, the ears and then the touch are definitely part of the VR experience. And then now what's coming out and I just purchased one recently is a haptic suit, where you put on a vest and if someone touches you on the shoulder, you'd feel that tap. When you're playing a video game, Call of Duty, you'll feel the shots coming around your body. So the two that are missing is the smell and the taste. There is one company working on that smell thing. I have no idea how that's going to work, if you're putting in cartridges or I can't imagine how, but I've seen it. I've seen they're working on that.

Todd Wilson ([11:45](#)):

But are you saying on the touch side even, the way the technology is heading into the future, is it going to get closer and closer to where if I'm putting my hand on a sand-based surface or something, I'm going to be able to feel that texture? Or is it hard to get there in that?

DJ Soto ([12:05](#)):

I think ultimately the technology wants to replicate real life as close as it can, if not all the way. So I can see in the future gloves. Right now, I have controllers that give me feedback, but there's no reason that there wouldn't be a glove that you would have that would maybe give me the sense of something, a rough texture, or maybe it smooths out. I can totally see that being part of something in the future. So all of it, I think as I observe of developers is, "Let's replicate the real. Let's make this feel real. When people put it on, let's make them feel no difference." And there's a lot of that goes on into the UI, the design of it, the experience of it. So you don't feel detached. You're not in it and you don't touch something and you feel like, "Oh, I'm in a computer game or whatever." They'd want you to almost forget that you're in there.

Todd Wilson ([12:55](#)):

You've written about the difference between virtual reality, augmented reality, and next generation technologies. Can you just give us... What's the difference in that? Say virtual reality versus augmented reality?

DJ Soto ([13:11](#)):

Yeah. So a virtual reality is a closed experience in the sense that when you put on the goggles, it goes dark for a second and then a new reality awakens. Augmented reality is very different in that it overlays on the world. So it would be more like see-through. As VR would be covered, augmented reality, you can actually see through, and let's say I could hold up a model of the solar system, spin planets around, and I could place it on my desk. Maybe I could put my calendar and put it over here in the floating in the sky. So you still are interacting with the physical world, but you've augmented it to have some virtual reality elements as a part of that world. So those are the two differences between virtual reality, augmented reality.

DJ Soto ([13:56](#)):

And I think one day in the future, they're going to put it all in one device. You'll have your VR glasses, your pair of sunglasses and they go dark and you're immersed in some world and then they open up and you can overlay what you've experienced. So at the end of the day, when you think of all technology and its diffusion of innovation, VR is very young. 2016, coming out at the consumer level. Maybe VR experts would say it's been around longer, but at a consumer level, it's an infant. So it's got some ways to grow and in the short amount of time, it's made leaps and bounds.

Todd Wilson ([14:31](#)):

All right. So using what we've talked about, especially in the visual sense and the audible sense for a minute, let's jump into church world a minute. You are planting Virtual Reality Churches.

DJ Soto ([14:46](#)):

Right.

Todd Wilson ([14:47](#)):

So let's talk with where the technology is right now, on the best case scenario right now. Let's talk that. What you're doing in the best case, what is that experience? What does it mean, Virtual Reality Church? Is this mimicking the physical building and it's like you think you're walking into the regular building, or what exactly is Virtual Reality Church?

DJ Soto ([15:12](#)):

Yeah. So in a nutshell, my wife and I were pastors at a physical church for many years and then we left to go plant physical churches. At least that's what we thought, and realized that we were going to be planting virtual reality churches. Took us a little bit of time, but once we experienced VR in 2016 and we experienced the metaverse and I was meeting people from all over the world in these immersive environments, it didn't take long for me to say, "Hey, let's try a church in here. Let's try a church service." And sure enough, we had a church service. It was very traditional. In one sense, it wasn't a church building. It was like a skyscraper, it was like an apartment. I had a little screen there and people would come in and I would greet them. We would have a time of prayer and worship and a sermon.

DJ Soto ([15:53](#)):

And it definitely evolved since then. As we've grown, people have been attending, leaders and volunteers have arisen, and in some sense, it's not very different from a mega church experience where you would come in. There's a large building that we have right now that you come into and there's announcements, there's music, there's a worship, there's prayer. What is pretty unique though that you'll see things change is once we go into the sermon. And once we go into the sermon, we build these sets for whatever we're talking about. So let's say we're talking about Moses and the Red Sea, we'll build the Red Sea and we'll walk through it on dry land. And what we're doing there is we're reflecting the experience of this new age, where the information age is over and the experience age is beginning, and the experience age reflects our virtual reality and augmented reality. So for someone, if this is your first time, you would put on the headset, we're in a platform-

Todd Wilson ([16:47](#)):

DJ, can I just... I don't mean to cut you off, but just to clarify for my benefit what you just said, so if you were... If one week in church, you're preaching on Jesus walking on the water, so the virtual reality part of this, you might actually create where people are in the boat watching Jesus, Tom or even...

DJ Soto ([17:10](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah.

Todd Wilson ([17:12](#)):

And you'd create that in a close to reality sort of thing?

DJ Soto ([17:16](#)):

Yes. It's hard to say how many sets we've created. Maybe virtual reality sets, maybe hundreds, because we change them for every passage of the Bible. And we generally speaking, go through a chapter of the Bible every week. So whatever chapter that is, we're building something new for that. And exactly if it was the story of Jesus walking in the water, we would create that. One of my favorite scenes visually was when Paul was in the shipwreck in the boat in Acts. And we got on the boat, the rain was coming down and there was ship. Part of that ship was shipwrecked and we were reading through the scriptures. We were dramatizing the experience. The people were on the boat themselves. And then we would walk off the boat onto the island where the snake bit Paul there and we had a little fire going and snake there, and we were all on the beach.

DJ Soto ([18:03](#)):

So we're walking through these experiences and that's exactly what we do. We create that. And Easter is fantastic. We'll walk into the tomb, we'll climb the Hill of Golgotha, we'll go into the upper room and hide with the disciples. I mean, you name it. If it's in the scriptures, we've probably built something to experience that. And there has been some really unique builds. So right now, we're in the Book of Hebrews going chapter by chapter and we built a lot of, maybe not one for one, but replicas of the tabernacle and in going through that, the inner, the most holy and all those elements that make it more tactical and experiential. So, yeah, it's a fantastic team of volunteers that they're probably building even right now for what's coming up on Sunday.

Todd Wilson ([18:49](#)):

So if I just take what you've just described, the experience part, I think the word you used were moving from the information age to the experience age and it sounds like what you're talking about is instead of just showing up at church and hearing information or a sermon that's information presentation, this is the ability to experientially immerse yourself in the actual walking through the Red Sea being parted or walking on the water with Jesus, or is that the idea from information to experience?

DJ Soto ([19:27](#)):

Yeah, correct. Yeah. I'm not saying this in a critical way, but the church has reflected the information age, right? In its previous iteration of church, as far as let's attain information. In this next iteration, the church is going to get involved in the experience age, where we become tactical, we become experiential. And what we've noticed at least by observation, and maybe some sociologists need to get in there and study this, but the scriptures are imprinting at a different level than I've ever seen before, particularly with new believers, particularly with babies in Christ who are now experiencing with the scripture in an experiential way and tactical way. And it seems like at least by observation is their growth is being multiplied because of them being immersed in scripture. The scripture is all around them and the story is all around them.

DJ Soto ([20:13](#)):

And it's hard to maybe get bored, fall asleep or whatever, because you're looking at the burning bush. You're actually walking by it and the bush is on fire. So I think there's something really unique about it that we're just scratching the surface, and I think the church is going to be blessed by this experiential age. I think of course, we're going to have... My experience with church is maybe we'll go kicking and screaming into the technology, but once we get in there, I think we're going to feel blessed by the experiences that we're having.

Todd Wilson ([20:44](#)):

Here's what I'm a little confused at. So people are willing to go to movie theaters for 3D movies kind of thing. If you're saying the technology already exists to create this experiential thing, why are we not seeing more brick and mortar churches building services around VR where you physically go to church, you don't yet put your headset on, you do your hugging with people, you do... You're drinking the coffee thing, and then the experiential part being what you're talking about?

DJ Soto ([21:19](#)):

You mean putting on a VR during a sermon or something like that? Yeah.

Todd Wilson ([21:22](#)):

Yeah, putting on VR headset. Why are we not seeing brick and mortar churches where when you get to the auditorium, everybody's putting on their VR headsets?

DJ Soto ([21:30](#)):

Yeah. I think there's two reasons. One is that like any technology, it can be expensive to start. When I first got into VR in 2016, it was \$2,000. You had to have a beefy computer. The VR headset from Oculus who are now owned by Facebook, it was good thousand dollars, but just like any diffusion of innovation, it's going to get smaller, lighter, cheaper. So now they're in the \$299 range and it's double the power that that first VR headset was, or maybe not double, but they're more powerful. So I think it was just cost prohibitive at first. I think it's getting more accessible. I do think it is a unique technology that I think freaks people out at first whether... Then I've heard this, the reaction to social media, getting addicted to video games, Netflix binging, and now we have this new technology. Are we just going to lose ourselves with it?

DJ Soto ([22:19](#)):

So there's a little bit of an anti-technology attitude that I've seen with some church leaders. So I think that's one. I think the cost is another one, and then I think the third one is that to do so, you're really going to have to shift what you've done. Right? So what you've done, you have a methodology and system to diffuse into YouTube, Facebook. I mean, this is all just a flow that really works well for churches. To add VR, where you're creating something completely new, I think it's going to be a tough, tough thing to add in there. I totally think they should, but it would take a shifting of what is their habit right now.

Todd Wilson ([22:58](#)):

But wouldn't this be a great opportunity for reaching the next generation? I mean, we're losing teenagers and even the young generation. I mean, what if we were offering virtual reality experiences at church? I mean, I understand they cost more, but is that....? Would people come to that or would they just assume, stay home and do it from home?

DJ Soto ([23:20](#)):

I think they would come. What's interesting is when people... We have a lot of youth, 13 to 24-year old, mostly male. DJ, what's your demographics for some of your churches? I feel like it's probably 18 to 24 year olds, 90% male. So we could criticize whether that's good or bad or whatever, but that's a little snapshot of the uniqueness of what we're interacting with. And what's interesting is they come because of the excitement of the technology. They don't know about me. I'm not a necessarily a great speaker. There isn't anything unique to me, but they just hear Virtual Reality Church, MMO Church, there's just something that excites them about that and they come.

DJ Soto ([23:56](#)):

And honestly, I'm just an okay speaker and the service isn't necessarily mind blowing is when we think of world-class church organizations, but they love it and it's so unique. We haven't necessarily invented the wheel, but we've re-imagined the experience. The experience is very similar to what they would experience in church. They won't go to church, but they're going to come to VR and MMO Church. So, yes, I think churches should totally get into it and I think they would see increase of the youth interacting with them. But again, it's a big step and hopefully they'll get there.

Todd Wilson ([24:32](#)):

Clarify another aspect of the technology. Again, I apologize for not being an expert at the [inaudible 00:24:38].

DJ Soto ([24:38](#)):

No, [inaudible 00:24:39].

Todd Wilson ([24:40](#)):

The use of avatars, I hear about avatars in virtual reality. So talk a little bit about what the role of avatars are.

DJ Soto ([24:49](#)):

Right. Yeah. So 2000 is... Actually the next decade is going to be the rise of the avatar. We're going to see, I've heard that term over and over again, where our physical expression will be represented digitally or in virtual reality. Some people might see that as a negative thing, but I think it's definitely a positive thing. It's just a whole another world to explore. So an avatar is just that. It's a digital representation of your physical self. A couple of things behind that, some people might say, "Won't people be fake? Won't people change who they are?" What's interesting is to watch when people create their avatars, they try to create it as close to the physical self as possible. Not everybody, but most everyone I know has same hair length, same hair color. That's a fascinating thing. They're not changing elements of that.

DJ Soto ([25:36](#)):

They have a lot of fun with the clothing, maybe an accessory or two, but that's a unique thing to pay attention to that people aren't changing who they are. They want to be known. They want to be known for who they are in a digital world. And then the second thing is the way they express themselves in virtual reality. So the other criticism we get about avatar church, if you will, is, "Well, people will be fake." They won't. They'll just put on a front or change who they are, but we found the opposite to be true. Because of the avatar, there's a sense of authenticity that I've never experienced before, and I think that is been a very powerful part of the ministry of VR Church is people have been able to come in to be who they are, not be judged by, let's say weight or race or whatever, and they're able to interact in their authentic selves. So the criticism of avatars is really actually the opposite. There is a deep authenticity and people don't try to change themselves. They try to keep like who they are in the physical world.

Todd Wilson ([26:37](#)):

So to clarify, right now, if you put the headset on into an average virtual reality environment right now, you're seeing avatars, or you're seeing... Like in a video game, it's a life. They try to get it as life-like representation. Which is it in virtual reality right now?

DJ Soto ([26:54](#)):

It's avatars. So the technology is a little bit... I'm going to... Maybe crude's not the best word, but still underdeveloped. The sophistication of, let's say a High-Rez avatar isn't here yet, but it's very close. I've seen some prototypes of just lifelike individuals. As a matter of fact, if you didn't know that that was an avatar, you'd have thought that was a real person. So that day is coming, when that photo realistic skin tone, facial expressions, some of the VR headsets coming out are going to be able to read when you blink your eye, facial recognition, as far as the tones in your face, if you smile or if you frown. So all of that is heading there. When you look at pictures of it now, it might seem maybe cartoonish, maybe like Nintendo Wii avatars or something a little more... People might say, "Oh, it seems weird, but that technology is slowly making strides to hyper-realism.

Todd Wilson ([27:48](#)):

And if you look out into the future, what you're saying is it's going to get closer and closer to reality of what a person looks like.

DJ Soto ([27:55](#)):

Absolutely.

Todd Wilson ([27:56](#)):

And even on the touch side of things, when you're describing the jackets and things, that technology is going to keep going. What I hear you saying is one of the complaints I hear about VR as well, what about the personal hug? But you're saying that technology is there that with the jackets, it might not be a, we'll say a real hug, but you can actually even get the touch part of a hug through the [crosstalk 00:28:21].

DJ Soto ([28:21](#)):

Right. Yeah. The high fives, the hugs, the handshakes, all of that. And even, even without the suit, we still experienced some of that. So one of the metaverses we're in, when you give a handshake, you feel the tactic experience happening. So, yeah. And then with the suits and then eventually with the gloves and then all of that, it's going to make it very experiential for sure.

Todd Wilson ([28:40](#)):

So as we wind down here, DJ, you said that originally the calling you thought was to plant physical churches.

DJ Soto ([28:48](#)):

Correct.

Todd Wilson ([28:48](#)):

Tell us a little bit here as we wind down, the dream for church planting and I even saw in your write-up, a church planting movement in the metasphere. So give us a little bit of that vision for church planting and even a movement of church plants in the metasphere.

DJ Soto ([29:05](#)):

Right. So the metaverse is made up of multiple virtual reality and digital cities. So it's not like there's just one. For example, we have New York and Tokyo and Rome, and in the same way in the metaverse, we have VRChat, Altspace, Rec Room, these different cities. So what VR Church has done, we just haven't gone in and planted one church in one city. We've planted multiple churches all across the metaverse. And just like some people are drawn to New York City and some people love Tokyo or Paris, in the same way, you'll find in virtual reality, people like their particular metaverse. They like this part of the world. They won't go over there for whatever reason. They might not like it, or maybe it's not cool for them. So we've planted churches in each unique space. So that's when we say we're fundamentally a church planting movement. So it's not just one church, we're spanning multiple churches all across these virtual cities.

Todd Wilson ([29:59](#)):

And the idea of a church there is that there's some kind of connection of a family of people or a group of people, there's some element of bringing the Bible in, some element of disciple-making. What would you say... What's the minimum ecclesiology of church in the metaverse?

DJ Soto ([30:21](#)):

Yeah. I mean, we're definitely... Fundamentally, we're cultivating these loving spiritual communities across the metaverse. And how does that look like? Well, I think about that verse where it says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them." And at the core, if we have two or three in some remote virtual city gathered in the name of Christ and worship and prayer, discipleship and all those things, we've just formed a church there. For me, that's the fundamental building blocks. And then obviously, we build on those things and they expand in their vision, but for us, we've just started cultivating these spiritual communities, establishing leadership and volunteers and education, spiritual growth, prayer. Any facet that we've experienced in the physical church, we've brought over to their Virtual Reality Church and enhanced, imagined, retooled or whatever, but it still exists there in some form or fashion. Even sacraments, that can be another controversial topic, but for us, we do VR baptisms and the Lord's Supper and all that, and all those different metaverses are experiencing those things.

Todd Wilson ([31:34](#)):

What are you most excited about for the next, say five years in this space?

DJ Soto ([31:41](#)):

The thing I'm excited about, I think is many things, is the continuation of the vision to cultivate multiple communities, church planning across the metaverse, that's one. The second thing that I love to see is the light bulb come on from different individuals who are now leading their own digital or virtual ministry where they said, "Oh, you guys can do this?" And they come and visit, they're inspired and now they're launching their own, and that's exciting for me to watch. This second generation or inspired generation side of it. And then for us, I think we are just excited as well about part of our vision statement is next-gen technology. So where's this all going? Is it VR? Is it AR? Is it a mix of both? Mixed reality is another word coming into the mix. The blockchain, how does it fit into all this?

DJ Soto ([32:28](#)):

So for us, we are poised to move into all of this whole new sphere, and I think we're excited about that delving into it, figuring it out, creating what maybe augmented reality church, maybe the blockchain church. Who knows what's coming up? So I think that's really... I'm really looking forward to what's coming and how we're going to evolve into it.

Todd Wilson ([32:49](#)):

Well, this is really exciting. DJ, how would people connect with you? Is there an online website where people can connect with what you're doing?

DJ Soto ([32:57](#)):



Yes. Vrchurch.org has a lot of great info and all my social media links are there as well. If they want to connect on Facebook or Twitter or TikTok, that's a great place to find the vrchurch.org.

Todd Wilson ([33:09](#)):

Vrchurch.org. All right. Thanks for being with us, DJ. Appreciate it.

DJ Soto ([33:12](#)):

Hey, thanks Todd for the invite. I appreciate it.