

God's Vision of Hope– Part 2: To Transform Lives

1. Review of Series

- a. Christmas Season reminds us of what God did and why.
 - i. AMAZING that God, the Creator, would allow Himself to become a creature and subject Himself to the limitations of our physical, created realm.
- b. Last week we talked about the fact that God has a vision. God has a plan. God knows the end before the beginning and He establishes what will happen. He sets the plan in motion to achieve that goal.
- c. His goal? **God created you and I to be the objects of His love.**
- d. We understand that sin is a barrier to receiving His love, so He sent His Son, born of a woman, to come into our world, grow up, establish His kingdom, suffer and pay the penalty of our sins, and to be raised again.
- e. Christmas is for us, the realization of God's plan, the establishment of His work in human History, and the beginning of the completion of God's vision. We get to *experience* God's love because of Jesus Christ entering our world!
- f. Last week, we talked about the fact that God has a plan for our world but He also has a vision for our church.
 - i. And we talked about our name "Here's Hope" – with a verb in it! How many churches do you know that have a verb in their name?
 - ii. And we talked about being a "safe harbor of God's love" – a place where people find hope and refuge, where they can find God and where God meets their deepest needs.
- g. And we learned what "vision" is...it is seeing by faith what has not yet come to pass and living by faith until it becomes visible.

This week we will learn a bit more about God's vision of hope for our world.

2. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove (demonstrate) what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

Romans 12:2

- a. I used to think that this passage meant that if my mind was renewed I would "know the will of God for my life." But I have learned that **the word "prove" means to demonstrate or make known.**
 - i. God wants your life to demonstrate in practical ways what His will is for people.
 - ii. God wants your life to show others what heaven is like and what He is like.
 - iii. God wants your life to be a reflection of who He is. (good, acceptable and perfect).
 - iv. God wants your life to make Him known.
 - v. Is it doing that? Let's figure out why or why not.
- b. When you came into this world, you were being brainwashed from the first moment you could learn and understand.
 - i. You got a "world view" taught to you.
 1. It is about the here and now.
 2. It is about getting all you can and canning all you get.
 3. It is all about me.
 - ii. You got a self-image taught to you as well.
 1. You were taught that your value came from what you did.
 2. You were indoctrinated to believe that you could earn love and acceptance.
 3. Unknowingly and unwittingly, your parents, peers, siblings, friends, enemies, co-workers...all taught you to believe certain lies about yourself. Lies that you believe to this very day.
 4. I have counseled with some of you. I know the lies the enemy has tried to get you to believe. God wants you to be set free of those lies!

- iii. The problem is, we don't "unlearn" what we have been programmed to think and believe overnight.
 - 1. *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*
 - 2. When we become followers of Christ, our world view begins to change. But ever so slowly. You see, we have been BRAINWASHED our entire lives to live according to the pattern of this world. We don't unlearn that overnight.
 - 3. And so our mind is renewed, regenerated, and changed.
 - 4. **When our minds are renewed, we learn to think about things not from this world's temporal perspective, but from God's eternal perspective.**
 - a. We live for God and for others instead of ourselves.
 - b. We think about the eternal implications of our actions.
 - c. We see things the way God does.
 - d. We think with the "mind of Christ" instead of our own minds.
 - e. We replace the lies we were taught about ourselves with the truth's that God declares about us.
 - i. Truth's like, "*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future*". (Jeremiah 29:11)
 - ii. Or "*The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.*" (Dt. 31:8)
 - iii. I could go on and on with the declarative promises of God that tell us of our eternal value and significance.
- iv. The bottom line is that our minds must be renewed so that our lives will be transformed.
 - 1. One of the problems with an "unrenewed mind" is that we live defeated, unproductive, unfruitful lives.
 - 2. When Jesus was with His disciples, you could see the products of the their unrenewed minds...they fought for attention, they were fearful, boastful and prideful. It wasn't until after His crucifixion, resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit that they began to experience the fruit of a renewed mind.
 - 3. But so many folks want to experience the power of the Christian life without the disciplines of the renewed mind.
 - a. We expect that God will just "download" into our brains an instantaneous renewal when He sets our hearts on fire with the Holy Spirit.
 - b. That is why our churches are inward focused, instead of outward focused.
 - c. We are pursuing God's will with our old minds and attitudes.
 - d. God's ways are not our ways! We must permit Him to change our thinking so that our behavior can change with it. Only then will we be world-changers as well.
 - 4. This week I had an experience where a lady called about help with an eviction notice. I chatted for a few minutes and when it was clear that I couldn't help her, she thanked me for my time and hung up. It never occurred to me (old mind) to ask her if I could pray for her (Mind of Christ). Because I was trapped in my old way of thinking and acting, I failed to bring her hope. How many of you struggle daily with the same thing?
- c. This passage in the 12th chapter of Romans spells out one of the principle goals of the Christian life.
 - i. It is to be transformed into the image and likeness of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - ii. God wants you and I to accurately reflect who He is and to make Him known through your words, your conduct and your actions.
 - iii. We can do that only by allowing God to develop the mind of Christ within us.

1. The principle way our minds are renewed is through a regular study and reading of God's word, the Bible.
2. It is one of the reasons we study the bible together each morning at 9:45 am. We want to understand and know who God is and what He wants for us. We want our minds renewed by the truth.

iv. Jennifer and I will be co-teaching a "new Christians' class" for anyone who has questions on the Christian life at 9:45.

3. Church Vision Statement:

- a. I mentioned God has a vision for our church. We have heard him speak and believe it is our job to pursue His vision.
- b. Recall our church's vision statement: "We exist to be a safe harbor of God's love where people are transformed into devoted followers of Christ who change their world with the power, love and grace of God."
- c. "...where people are transformed into devoted followers of Christ..."
 - i. I want to spend a moment and share with you how we as a church cooperate with God in the transformational process.
 - ii. Bible study is one way to renewing our mind."
 - iii. But that isn't sufficient to change the way we think. We need practical applications in real life contexts to challenge our old way of thinking so that we replace it with God's ways.
 - iv. Each Sunday you hear stories from folks about how God has used them to make a difference in someone else's life. You probably wonder, "Gee, I sure would like God to use me like that...but I don't know how."
 - v. When Jesus was forming the character of his disciples, he didn't stop with bible studies with His disciples.
 1. He also *showed* the disciples how to do things and then led them to go try it out. (sending of the 12, 70, multiplication of loaves, etc.).
 2. You may be afraid of trying to do some things, but would you try it if someone else were with you, showing you how or doing it in front of you?
 - vi. We are going to train folks in 2009 on:
 1. **Altar Counseling**/prayer ministry (like the deacons and I do each Sunday). (Jan 10th tentative date, 9am – Noon).
 2. **Seeds of Hope visitation training**– how to develop a Christian conversation with a person in need. (Jan 10th, plus another date).
 3. **Ministering the Heart of God** Seminar (March 20-22, 2009). How to hear God in the midst of ministry or crisis so that you can respond with God's heart and words.
 - vii. Most of these experiences will help you to learn first hand (not just book knowledge) but first hand how to do things that you have never done before. They will include practical experiences in which you can take what God is teaching you out into the world and apply it in people's lives.

4. Folks, When Jesus ascended to Heaven to return to His Father, the eleven disciples stood and watched Him rise through the clouds. An angel in the clouds nearby saw Jesus pass by and called out, "Jesus, where are you going?" "Back to be with my Father in Heaven," he said.
 - a. "I thought you were going to bring salvation to the whole world!" the angel protested.
 - b. Jesus said, "I have. The atonement is complete. My work on earth is finished."
 - c. "But who is going to be your witness and go out into the world and spread the Good News and tell people you love them?"
 - d. "They are," Jesus said motioning toward his disciples.

- e. The angel looked down on the rag-tag group of disciples who had abandoned Jesus at the cross, fought for the place of honor, couldn't cast out a demon, and had cowered before a storm and said, "Do you have a plan B?"
 - f. "No" Jesus replied, "They are the only plan."
5. God is depending upon you and me to be His agents of change in a rotting and corruptible world. He has no other plan. There is no plan b. You and I are His plan.
- a. Will you cooperate with God in being transformed by the renewing of your mind? Or will you sit back and simply let the devil tell you how to live?
 - b. Will you make a choice to engage in ministry training that stretches you so much that the power of God is necessary?
6. Will you let God have His way in your life? Will you let Him use you? Will you let Him renew your mind and transform your life? Or will you stay comfortable, and useless.