

This weekend was our annual “Vision Weekend”. The theme this year is “Greater Things”.

You will see greater things... John 1:50

You will do even greater things... John 14:12

On Sunday, Steve shared a messaged title: Living a Life of Purpose. ‘Purpose’ is necessary in order to help us see and do greater things.

We are all born with a purpose, but that purpose is not ‘new’ to God. He knew our purpose at the beginning of the world, and He designed us and timed our birth with that purpose in mind. We get to choose to walk in that purpose (or not), but we only get one shot at this life so what we do really matters!

SETTLE THE CORE ISSUES

Joshua was a man who lived out his God-given purpose. He was Moses’ assistant and successor - one of only two adults who experienced Egyptian slavery and lived to enter the Promised Land. He was a brilliant military strategist who won many battles, and he led the Israelites into their God-given homeland. Joshua was faithful to ask God’s direction in all the challenges he faced. Towards the end of Joshua’s life, the people of Israel came to a point where they had to decide whether they would obey the Lord, who had proven His trustworthiness or obey their man-made idols. This was Joshua’s plea to them: *‘Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshipped beyond the River Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.’* Joshua 24:14-15. In taking a stand for the Lord, Joshua again displayed his spiritual leadership. Regardless of what others decided, Joshua was determined to stick to his commitment to God.

Elijah also challenged people to take a stand - to follow whoever was the true God: *Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, “How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!” But the people were completely silent.* (1 Kings 18:21). Why were the people wavering between the two choices? Many knew that the Lord was God, but they enjoyed the sinful pleasures that came with following Ahab and his idolatrous worship.

It’s easy to slip into a false sense of security, going about living your life your own way, drifting along with whatever is pleasant and easy. But there comes a time when you have to choose who or what will control you. The choice is yours: will it be God; your own limited self; or some other imperfect substitute? Settle the core issues as Joshua and Elijah did. The way we live shows others the strength of our commitment to serving God.

Steve used the analogy of a brick wall to demonstrate this concept. You have to come to a point where you stop wavering and draw a line in the sand - a mark where you’re

going to build a wall on where you stand on things. And then you have to dig the foundations and start building that wall, brick-by-brick. And by building a wall on one good decision, it rules out a lot of bad decisions. As you move forward from that wall and the winds of life knock you about and blow you back, you go no further back than that wall - because that’s the line where you settled where you stand on core issues.

FIVE CORE ISSUES

1. We will serve the Lord

But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.’

Joshua 24:15. This is a core issue that every one of us needs to settle. Ecclesiastes 3:11 states God has “set eternity in the human heart.” This means that we can never be completely satisfied with earthly pleasures or pursuits. He has built in us a restless yearning for the kind of perfect world that can only be found in His perfect rule. He has given us a glimpse of the perfection of His creation. So we must trust Him now and do His work on earth.

2. We are committed to church community

Christ is the head of the Church, and we are the body. The head and the body don’t exist independently of each other. If you’ve settled this core issue then you’ll find that you come to Sunday services, you’re plugged into a life group, and you’re involved with serving in the Church.

3. We are here to make a difference

John Piper said: “But whatever you do, find the God-centered, Christ-exalting, Bible-saturated passion of your life, and find your way to say it and live for it and die for it. And you will make a difference that lasts. You will not waste your life.” We are givers not takers. The ‘muscles’ of our faith were designed to work by looking out for others.

4. We are people of the Book

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Joshua 1:8. This doesn’t mean just attending a Bible-teaching church. It’s about getting stuck into the Bible - even if it’s just 15 minutes a day. Find a Bible reading plan that works for you (consider downloading the free YouVersion app). And if you don’t have a hunger for God’s word, ask Him to create a hunger and thirst within you for His word!

It all starts with making a decision: “I am a person of the Book”. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. Psalm 119:14-16.

5. We are people of Prayer

Talking to God is an important part of building our relationship with Him. Many of us struggle when it comes to praying out loud - especially in a group session. The best way to overcome that is to start praying out loud when you’re on your own. If you don’t know where to start with prayer, use the Lord’s Prayer as an outline (Matthew 6:9-13).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Icebreaker (choose one):

- If it is your first meeting of 2017, share your highlights over the last few weeks.
- What do you love most about CityHill Church?

Questions for Groups (choose 2 or 3):

1. What were your highlights from Vision Weekend and Sunday's message?
2. Read Joshua 24:14-28. This passage is Joshua's challenge to the people of Israel to commit themselves to God fully.
 - a). Discuss a time when someone challenged you to fully commit yourself to something (e.g. work, school, marriage). How did you respond?
 - b). Joshua repeats his challenge to the people three times. He wanted to make sure that they knew the seriousness of the commitment they were making. What is the difference between making a commitment based on emotions and one that is fully thought out? How can you make sure your commitments are fully thought out?
3. On Sunday Steve spoke about five core issues that need to be settled in order to live out God's purposes for our lives:
 - We will serve the Lord
 - We are committed to church community
 - We are here to make a difference
 - We are people of the Book
 - We are people of prayerWhich of these 5 needs the most attention in your life?
4. What do you think the difference is between going to church and being part of a church? (Read Acts 2:42-47 for insight).
 - a). In what ways has the local church helped you grow in your spiritual maturity?
 - b). Many people seek to find purpose and community outside of the church. In what ways could this hamper an individual's growth?
5. Over the next two Sundays, we are invited to get involved in serving in the life of the church. What areas have you been involved in previously, and what are you thinking of getting involved in this year?

PRAYER POINT

Spend time praying for boldness and courage to invite friends to come to the Detox series. And passion for advancing God's kingdom in every area of our lives this year.

ACTION POINTS

- In three weeks we are starting a six-week church-wide series called Detox. It is in the same format as the Transformed series and Better Together series we have run previously. This is a fantastic opportunity to invite people to join your group for the duration of the series - and hopefully, they will stay on afterwards! Make a list of 2 or 3 friends each that you could invite to join your group. Note to leaders: Is there anyone in your group who would like to host their own six-week group during the Detox series? (Names can be emailed to nikkit@cityhill.co.za).
- Is there anyone in this group who has not yet been baptised and wants to obey God's command in this area? The next water baptism service is on 17th February, and there is a water baptism teaching on Sunday, 10th of February. (Please send names through to admin@cityhill.co.za).