

Launch Into God's Story

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*Vision Week Melted into a week about Stepping into the call of God on your life and the idea of **significance** / making an impact for Jesus before your time on earth is gone.*

INTRODUCTION

Well this month, we talked about Gideon, Abraham, Peter & Elisha, all launching out in faith and saying YES to the voice and call of God - leaving what they knew to be normal to embrace the miraculous adventure with God. I always select one key verse for a sermon series and that's ...

Philippians 3:13 “**Brothers, I do not consider myself perfect. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**”

Faith always involves action, leaving what you know; saying “YES” to God’s voice, to believe and GO!

Today, I want to put it in terms a story.

Lead Role: Jesus, not you.

Supporting Cast: us

Author of the story: Father

Director - Holy Spirit

There is a specific role you're to play in **God's STORY!** That talent and gift is what you USE to take you into your promise. God supernaturally blesses our practical effort. YOU are NEEDED in the KINGDOM of GOD! To say YES to God's new future for you, you often have to say NO to the past and to what you know & what you are comfortable with. There might be friends to risk, finances to risk, habits to give up. We leave the old way of life behind in order to chase after God - to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The way to ensure you play your role and live the life that God intended is that you first surrender to Jesus Christ - letting Him forgive all your sins and make you new - born again! Then, you follow His Holy Spirit. He leads you and guides you into the adventures with God - each and every day - leading you - teaching you HOW to live and HOW to play your part in GOD's ETERNAL STORY!

When you get to Heaven, I want you to receive what I want to receive - a crown of glory so that we can lay it at the feet of Jesus! I want him to say to be "Well done good and FAITHFUL servant." Don't you want that? I know I do.

The same way the Disciples followed Jesus is the same way that you and I follow the Holy Spirit. He is the voice of Jesus on the earth leading and guiding us into faithful obedience and family-building.

Zacheus - Tell Story

So for Zacheus, when he encountered the true love of Jesus, it changed him completely! He gave away MORE than what he had stolen.

Because he experienced radical grace, he gave away radical grace. Because he realized that God was incredibly generous to Him with grace, he was incredibly generous with his finances. That was one way he could express his gratitude to Jesus.

Jesus was teaching Zacheus that he was family - that everyone who called upon the name of the Lord was family. Let's back up to the "father of our faith" the man we talked about last week for a while...

Abraham

Just think. God says to Abraham "Look at the stars! I will make your children as numerous as them!" (pic / video loop of amazing stars)

I'm going to make your children as numerous as them. Now. Get up, fold up your tent and start walking." "Where God?" "I'll show you. Just walk." He could've thought "Sarah, I imagine, we'll lose all our livestock in that move. I imagine, I'll never recoup all that I've built over the years.... It won't work." Instead, he lived by faith and imagined what God had promised. The rest is history.

Abraham left his home country and began walking but then what? **WE** didn't finish the story!

God's blessing is always meant to be generational! God's blessing is never meant to stop with you. It's meant to be multiplied!

It's not meant to stop with you!

Your kids.

Your neighbors.

Coworkers.

Young men and women at church ...

WHO CAN YOU be a father to?

The Apostle Paul taught about this idea quite a bit and even made sure that the believers in Corinth were considered to be spiritual children of his - not just congregations or church members or even a crowd or “audience” They were his CHILDREN - dearly loved.

Notice how he words this in
1 Corinthians 4:14-18

“I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.”

The Spirit’s instructions are often tailored just for you because your calling is as unique as your DNA. Living on a prayer is leaving what you know; it’s saying “YES” to God’s voice, to believe and GO!

Abraham received a promise from God regarding a FOREVER FAMILY - the FAMILY of GOD. He received that promise - believing it in his heart. He gave up the comfort of his home, security, preconceived idea of what is possible.

What is a spiritual heir? We understand inheritance when it comes to money in the bank or a business that is left behind and the instructions in a last will and testament that determine who receives what. Those who receive an inheritance don’t have to worry about starting anything— that’s already been done. They can focus on growing and expanding what they’ve been given, whether it be investments, a business or real estate.

The same principle applies in the spiritual realm. Those who have gone before us in ministry and leadership pass on to us their blessing, wisdom, learning, resources, prayer and encouragement. This spiritual inheritance allows us to go further than they went, reap where they sowed and build on the foundation that they laid.

This is the heart of spiritual fatherhood and motherhood. It is a desire and commitment to see those who come behind us succeed in ways that we could only imagine, and it influences every aspect of how we develop leaders.

In the Old Testament, we see examples of how this could have worked but didn’t. For example, Scripture tells us that Elisha requested and received a double portion of the anointing of his spiritual father, Elijah. However, when Elisha became ill and was preparing for death, he had no one to whom to pass on the anointing in the way Elijah had to him.

Second Kings 13 recounts Elisha’s deathbed attempt to prophetically encourage the Israelite king Jehoash to defeat Israel’s enemies, the Arameans. Perhaps this king would be the one to carry on Elisha’s mandate to guide Israel to spiritual renewal and military victory. Unfortunately,

King Jehoshaphat's halfhearted response to Elisha's challenge reveals that this would not be the case, and the next verse (v. 20) sadly notes, "Elisha died and was buried."

With no one to carry on Elisha's anointing, the spiritual power he possessed went with him to the grave. In fact, the verses that follow document how, years later, when a dead man's body was dumped in Elisha's grave, the man promptly came back to life.

It is not until the New Testament that we see the fulfillment of this God-given expectation of generational anointing—something that the prophet Malachi points to when he predicts that a new and improved Elijah will come and "will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents" (4:6).

Of course, that fulfillment began with John the Baptist (the new and improved Elijah) as he prepared the way for Jesus Christ. While John's ministry (like Elijah's) was awe-inspiring to many of those who saw him, it paled in comparison to that of the One who came after him. And unlike Elisha, Jesus did not take the spiritual power He possessed to the grave. When Jesus rose from the grave, He breathed on His disciples and they received the Holy Spirit. From that point on, they walked in the same Holy Spirit anointing that Jesus walked in.

We need to have a vision of God that every generation would get bigger, better and stronger, that the anointing would double with each generation because of the spiritual inheritance we leave behind. This is what Jesus was teaching when he said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:12-13).

There are three key principles in this passage that form the foundation of what it means to pass on an inheritance as spiritual mothers and fathers:

As a spiritual mother or father, your goal is for those who follow you to do greater things than you.

As a pastor, if the primary goal or only goal of my life is to build a great church, I'm thinking with a limited vision. That's why I met with Jeremiah and a few others every single Thursday Jan through May. That's why I meet with a few guys once a month at Top Notch - guys I believe in - guys I believe are not only called to ministry but will do more for the Kingdom than I'll ever do. I believe in them and I make sure they know that I believe in them.

Why? I'm raising sons not building buildings. Instead, the goal of my ministry should be to see how many sons and daughters I can get on my shoulders. Whether they go into business, the media, education or pastoral ministry, **I want them to do greater things than me. Jesus wanted his sons and daughters (disciples) to do greater things than him. If we take on this heart, that is also our desire.** If you're a father or mother, and that isn't your goal, you're just competing with your sons and daughters. We should not feel intimidated, jealous or frustrated when we see those who come after us go beyond us. That's the desire! **As a spiritual mother or father, your heart is to empower those who follow you to reach their full potential.** This is what Jesus meant when He said, "I will do whatever you ask in my name" (v. 13). Jesus supported, empowered, prayed for and did everything in His power to ensure that His disciples succeeded in what He had called them to do. They lacked for nothing.

As a spiritual mother or father, your win is them winning. The difference between a true apostolic mother or father and a controlling one is that one of them says, "I want you to win because it makes me look good." The reverse is when a true spiritual mother or father says, "I want you to win because the only way I can truly win is when you win—because it's the joy of my life." **This is what the apostle Paul meant when he refers to followers as "you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown" (Philippians 4:1).**

If you're not careful, everything about your life will be how things impact *you* and how their decisions hurt *you* or help *you*. **God is never the God of just one person, family, church or movement. He is a multigenerational God—“the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”**

And the greatest thing you can do as a leader is to give your life as a spiritual inheritance so that every generation that comes after you is going to be bigger and better and stronger because they received a spiritual inheritance. They didn't have to start from scratch because they were on your shoulders. The sustained move of God is not about us praying for greater anointing for ourselves. It's about us getting a heart of being a father and mother.

1 Corinthians 4:15 says, “You have many teachers. You don't have many fathers and mothers.” That's just as true today as it was when the apostle Paul wrote it.

There are a lot of “teachers” who want to tell you what they think you should do from a distance but *very few* “fathers and mothers” who are willing to roll up their sleeves and walk out the journey of faith with you, day in and day out.

God has a knack for using ordinary things for extraordinary purposes for His glory. You and I are ordinary. Our possessions or talents may seem ordinary, but God can do the miraculous with them! God can help us raise up sons and daughters - not just biological - but spiritual sons and daughters who will do more in building the kingdom than we ever did! That's a huge part of our 10 Cities Vision - to create 10 churches where your children and grandchildren can not only hear the Gospel and worship Jesus but ALSO BRING THEIR FRIENDS and evangelize this entire County - winning thousands to Christ over the years!

God is helping you and He's helping me think long-term. He's wanting us to think “how will my faithfulness today impact the next generation? My faithfulness in my tithe and offering/building pledge. My faithfulness in my serving at church twice a month. My faithfulness in being a great neighbor and friend to my coworkers.

Elisha didn't pass down the blessing. His bones had power but the anointing was stuck in the found instead of alive in a son! Jesus ensured we would see ourselves as sons HEIRS and recipients of the same blessing power and calling to redeem mankind to the Father. *John 14-17

In John 17, we read about God's love being in Jesus and that promise given to us/ His followers - I will be IN you and you will be IN me and you will do even greater things (might be JN 14) ...

It's obvious that **God's love for humanity permeated Jesus' entire being.**

That love for humanity is then passed on to US when we let Him do a deep work within in. Like Gideon, you are one encounter with God away from an entirely different life.

We don't “do things for God” to impress him or impress others. We do them from a pure motive of glorifying God and blessing people. Abraham's promise wasn't for HIM. It was to bless others. Gideon's calling to rise up and be their leader wasn't so he could look special - it was for the express purpose of rescuing God's people from the oppression coming from the Midianites. **The purpose and call on your life, yes will make your life meaningful and rich, but it isn't for you. It's for the blessing of others - that others would KNOW God and KNOW his power and love. That's what vision is - it's what God can do through you for others. But that vision won't come to reality until we leave our past and say “YES” to God!**

The story of Abraham is the story of all of us. We can join God's story, the bigger story, and find the fulfillment and meaning God designed, or we can go our own way and write our story, complete with our own narrative, supporting cast and stage. Let's let GOD write our story! Let's join HIS story and we do that by faith!

Mankind has been given this choice over and over and over by God. God says to us "LET ME do something amazing with your life. Entrust your life to Me. Let me take care of you" Father God says. And we then have a choice. Do we live for ourselves and insist our existence is our own - we are self-made and self-sustaining and in our pride, reject our Creator's offer? OR do we humbly submit to Him and His Lordship.

This is true of the inmate, trapped in an 8x8 jail cell. (Pause so they imagine) and it's true of the successful businessman who's climbing the corporate ladder. Both have a choice. Let God forgive them of their sin and give them vision to live for Him OR live only for themselves.

Jesus left HEAVEN to restore us to the Father - to extend the FAMILY of God. When we truly see ourselves as sons and daughters, we begin to ask God "Who can we be a father or mother to?" We must begin to ask... How can God's blessing in my life be passed down not only to my kids but to spiritual children? Who has God placed in my life that I could be a spiritual parent to?

God the Father put a VISION in the heart of JESUS

It was that vision of seeing YOU restored to the Father that gave him the JOY to endure the cross scripture says.

YOU are the joy that gave Jesus the strength to endure the cross.

JESUS died to restore YOU to the Father. Jesus died to restore THEM to the Father. Open your hearts and let Father God put a parental love for people in you!

OPEN YOUR HEARTS and LET HIM WORK IN YOU RIGHT NOW!

ALTAR CALL HERE

IWMV Music on

Our mission as a church is this: *We are leading people to follow Jesus together.* That never changes. **But our vision, our preferred picture of the future - is that we Transform Trumbull through worship services, life groups and planting churches.**

THE USHERS ARE GOING TO PASS OUT the 10 Cities Booklet

I want to go through this booklet with you together.

If you were here last week, you got a copy...

Let's go through the booklet together - then I have some slides for you to view.

We are giving 7 pastors over the next 7 years:

Coaching

Care

Cash

For them to plant THEIR church.

On the last page of that booklet is a way for you to give.

My wife and I will never ask you to do something we aren't doing.

We gave \$5,000 to this mission and we are asking you to ask the Holy Spirit what HE wants you to give to bring this vision to pass.

WE made this a few years ago then revised it this fall because if you remember our first one said "Cortland Then the other locations had ? Bc we truly didn't know "Howland? Warren? Champion?" So now this is just revised to include our 3 campuses but also our planting initiative.

OUR 10 CITIES VISION is our PLAN A. God confirmed His promise towards us numerous times so There is no PLAN B. We are so pumped about what GOD is doing and still GOING TO DO to transform this whole region for His glory.

Screens - Correspond with the Booklet

ASK (WHAT DO I WANT THEM TO DO?)

6 Things About Your Promise & Purpose

- **It will scare you (it'll require others bc it's so big; this builds humility and character)**
- **It solves a conflict in your heart. Your conflict is often related to your calling.**
- **It brings a blessing to others. "Ambition is when you... Vision is when you..."**
- **It may be a ministry here at Rock of Grace**
- **It may NOT be a ministry here at Rock of Grace *While I think everyone can serve at ROG somewhere, your main gifting & purpose may not be in church; may be in marketplace or school board or somewhere outside this building.**
- **It will likely (not always) be somewhat obvious to others bc it's your gifting**

We have 4 initiatives for #TransformTrumbull

If you visit TransformTrumbull.com you'll see our progress but I wanted to share some of our progress with you today!

We believe Christians should be the most loving people in society; therefore it's up to the church to solve the orphan crisis in America and up to US to solve it here in our county. We set a goal of giving #EveryChild a safe and loving home in Trumbull County - specifically - seeing 140 kids placed in foster care then reunited with mom and dad once they recover OR adopted by 2030. *We've discovered that loving and helping mom and dad is just as needed as helping the kids. We've seen 36 kids come into care and another 27 given respite in Rock of Grace families! WOW! God is on the move!

Our 2nd Initiative is concerning drug and alcohol addiction Reducing overdoses deaths from 307 to 250. We believe the Gospel changes us from the inside out and we've seen him restore many in our congregation from addiction to a life of joy and meaning!

Last year, we wanted to see 4 new Life Groups began and we did! As you can see, there are now 16 Life Groups for you to experience genuine friendship - where you can commit to community like the early church did. Let's follow Acts 2 and meet in homes and discuss Jesus and how His Kingdom changes our lives. We wanted to see 25 people give their hearts to Jesus and we saw 30!

In 2022, let's get even more bold!

DISCIPLESHIP:

Let's pray for 3 new Life Groups to begin (for a total of 20) - for discipleship and community to take place

EVANGELISM / SALVATIONS

Let's pray and believe for 50 people to give their hearts to Jesus! With 3 campuses now, I believe that's definitely possible! Don't forget WHY we plant churches.

1. To pattern our church like the early church - believers in ACTS were leaving comfort to plant churches and ...
2. Reach Lost People with the GOSPEL
3. Assignment that came to me through 2 different people then confirmed a 3rd time by our District Pastor John Wooton.