

To build the church Jesus envisioned. To love the world he died to save.

This vision statement is built on the three words of this series.

WHY. DO. BE.

The first is from **Luke 19:10**, where we get the **WHY**:

“the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”

We asked the question: Is Jesus’ why my why?

Is Jesus’ reason for coming my reason for living?

We get the **DO** from Jesus’ declarative statement in **Matthew 16:18**:

“on this rock I will build my Church.”

We looked at the beginning of the Church in Acts 1 and the words of Jesus there and asked:

Is Jesus’ final commands my first concern?

We get **BE** from Jesus’ statement about his disciples in **John 13:35**:

“by this everyone will know you are my disciples: if you love one another.”

When Jesus says to seek and save the lost – we ask how.

His answer: build the Church.

When He says build my Church and we ask how...

His answer: *have love for one another.*

Be people of virtue and love.

God’s plan in building the church isn’t to build buildings. It’s to build people.

It’s not about square footage and brick and mortar. It’s about flesh and blood.

The Church is about hearts encountering God’s love and living changed lives as a result.

***When I become who I’m supposed to be, I accomplish all I was created to do,
So I can fulfill why Jesus came.***

Today we ask - Who are we supposed to be?

“As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, “The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will give his own glory to the Son, and he will do so at once. Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can’t come where I am going. So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

Judah Smith – a pastor out west – says to his kids every day before he drops them off for school

“We are Smiths what does that mean?”

“We are kind and encouraging and we look for lonely people.”

Christians by the very name are “little Christs”

Jesus is essentially saying in John 13 turning to his disciples as Judah Smith turns to his kids, and asking: ***We are Christs what does that mean?***

Love.

But what is the witness of the Church in our era?
By this the world will know I live for Christ:
If I shout down sin and speak the truth the loudest.

We want to declare. That's good. We SHOULD declare.
But we all too often skip an important step LOVE.

1 Corinthians 13 –

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing.

DISCOVER > DEMONSTRATE > DECLARE.

Discover God's love. Demonstrate God's love. Declare God's love.

Too often we skip the second step. We declare. We berate. We shout down. We send messages from our high horses.

Too rarely do we demonstrate.

'While attending a university in London years ago, one young man became interested in the Christian faith. Upon his graduation, he was almost convinced but was still seeking evidence that this faith was practical and true. He accepted employment in East Africa and for seven months lived in the home of a Christian family. As soon as he discovered they were followers of Christ, he decided their home would be the ideal testing ground for the evidence he sought. Unfortunately, as the months passed, he saw nothing that attracted him. The family was apathetic toward him and their faith. They didn't reach out to him or to others, and they were casual about their commitments in general. In fact, they complained about any sacrifices they had to make on behalf of others. They never connected with him. Consequently, this student's interest in God turned to disappointment. He left his pursuit of Christ and went a different direction, moving back home to India. He eventually led a revolution. This young man's name was Mahatma Gandhi'

One of Gandhi's more famous quotes was no doubt fruit of this experience:

"I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

1 John 2:6 – *Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.*

When we don't, the world notices.

We bear his name. Christians. Little Christs. Do we look like Christ?

Alexander the Great once found a soldier in his ranks who was accused of cowardice in the face of the enemy. When asked his name, the soldier replied, "Alexander." To this Alexander the Great replied, ***"Either change your name or change your behavior."***

Our culture bears the name "Christian" lightly – about ¾ of the nations claims it.

But they walk whatever path they choose.

God would say – ***either change your name or change your behavior.***

b-b-but wait... God loves me as I am and takes me as I am.
YES. That's the truth and beauty of the Gospel.
We don't wait to change our lives before coming to Christ.
We come to Christ and are changed.
But there's change.
It's OK to not be OK. It's not OK to stay that way.

As John puts it:

Those who call themselves Christians should live like Jesus did.

How many of you know this doesn't happen overnight?

There's no secret sauce. No Disney transformation. Time and time again we'll fall short.

Call ourselves Christians. Not live like Christ did.

It happens.

We talk about hypocrisy in the Church and we immediately think of "those people"

We point the finger toward scandals.

We point the finger toward moral failings.

A helpful and incredibly humbling question is this:

"What would the Church look like if everyone looked like me?"

Would it be empty or full? Would it be welcoming or cold?

Would it be broke and shut down or thriving and ministering?

1 Corinthians 13:1-11

*The Greek word is **agapē** used here describes the highest form of love. It is the love God has for his people. It is an intense affection that **must be demonstrated**. It is a loyal, endless, and unconditional commitment of love. Feelings are attached to this love. It is not abstract, but **devoted to demonstrating** the inward feelings of love toward another with acts of kindness and benevolence.*

Agape isn't just love declared. It is devoted to demonstrating.

Many theologians will say love is the chief virtue.

But love is the root from which all other virtues grow.

Agape is a virtue comprehensive word.

In 1 Corinthians 13 all of these qualities Paul lists are a part of love. They are facets of love.

"The most excellent way" in 1 Cor 13 // "The Fruit of the Spirit" from Gal 5

"rejoices with the truth" = Joy

"does not delight in evil" = Goodness

"keeps no record of wrongs" = Peace

"never fails, perseveres" = Faithfulness

"patient" (trusts, hopes) = Patience

"not boastful or proud" = Gentleness

"kind" (not rude) = Kindness

"not easily angered" = Self Control

5 Growth Lists in Scripture –

Matthew 5:3-10, Romans 12:9-21, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Galatians 5:22. 2 Peter 1:5

Want to paint a portrait of Jesus? These 24 compiled virtues are what paint the picture.

Paint by numbers... corresponding paint to use. These are the colors.

8 from Matthew 5:3-10: humble, emotionally honest, meek, desiring righteousness, merciful, truthful, peaceful, and devoted

4 from Romans 12:9-21: affectionate, fervent, serving, and hospitable

2 from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: faith and hope

8 from Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentle, and self-control

2 from 2 Peter 1:5-7: wisdom and persevering

2 Peter 1:8 – *the more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

That knowledge that you are itching to declare?

That truth you're itching to shout from the rooftops and quote from Facebook statuses?

It will be more productive if you show demonstrate love first.

This will look different in different people.

“Wine and Design.”

Technically everyone is painting the same thing. From the same image.

Yet after everyone puts in the hours of effort of replicating what was modeled...

they all look different! Each is unique. None are the same. That's celebrated in those classes.

We celebrate our differences here as well as we pursue Christ!

Diversity comes from diversity in personality, cultures, life experiences, etc.

What we don't run toward: diversity in character.

We should all be aiming for the character of Christ!

What portrait are you painting?

Nietzsche – *“I would believe in their salvation if they looked a little more like people who have been saved.”*

When people come to me and say they're floundering...

I point to the 12 pathways.

Prayer

Gathering

Stewardship

Fasting

Accountability

Generosity

Worship

Relationship

Resting

Scripture

Reaching

Serving

heaven now, Heaven forever... how does this old treasure fit into this new vision?

Here.

Jesus promised “Life and life abundant.” Eternal life now.
Too often we treat it like it’s a package dropped on our doorstep.
It’s a path. A journey. That takes discipline. Spiritual disciplines.

Abdication of sanctification.

Justification is positional holiness. Through grace, through Jesus’ blood, nothing more and nothing less, being in good standing with God. Forgiven. Called a son and daughter.
But the same way you want your son or daughter to grow and develop, God wants that for us.
Called to look more and more like God the father and our brother Jesus Christ.
This is **sanctification**.

Justification will matter at heaven’s gates. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. Not my own.
But Sanctification is part of what brings heaven here.
Discipline has become such a dirty word in a culture that preaches do what makes you happy.
But you want true happiness? Obey God’s Word and walk the pathways and disciplines he’s laid out for you.

What would the Church look like if the Church looked like me?

Would these pathways be present or absent?
Would it be generous or stingy? Would it be relational or cold?
Would it be accountable or full of hidden sin? Would it be prayerful or prayerless?

What would the Church look like if the Church looked like me?

Would it be Jesus?
His portrait is the one we’re called to paint.

Paul - “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.”

As an art major we had to do imitations. Copies of classic paintings.
No matter how hard I tried, I’d never be able to match it up exactly.

So why do art majors make copies? Why do artists set up aisles in museums to paint a painting?
It teaches technique. It inspires other paintings. It makes you a better painter yourself.
Matching the eye, the hand, that cloth... mixing color in an attempt to match color on another canvas.

What portrait are you painting?

If the whole Church looked like you, what would it look like? The answer I want? Jesus in all of his love and virtue. Every day I lay down another stroke. With every conversation I’m putting down more paint. What portrait am I painting?
Day in and day out you may look back and say I didn’t hit the mark. I didn’t match that stroke. My color and tone was wrong in this moment. But the good thing about paint, you get to paint over mistakes. There’s grace...