

## .ReFocus



### Our Mission: Matt 28:18-20

#### THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO THINGS WE CAN'T DO IN HEAVEN

One is S-I-N.

Isn't that wonderful? Won't that be great? You won't have to put up with all the sins that people commit against you, and they won't have to put up with YOUR SINS. ( Come quickly Lord Jesus).

There's something else we can't do in Heaven, but before we get to that I need to review the whole idea of REFOCUS. ("previously at Highlands Church...")

The IDEA of ReFocus is to take time to remember The Mission and Values of Highlands Church. I do this for you as a congregation because each year we have new people coming in. BUT I also do this for ME, because it helps me stay focused.

TEN years ago at this time I laid out a 500 year Mission. Our mission is the reason our church exists. It's why WE'RE here. It's LONG TERM and it's BIG.

I asked the questions, "If someone attends our church for 7 months what would s/he think is the MINISTRY priority / the organizing idea of Highlands?"

"What do we want to see as the fruit of our labors over the next 5, 15, 50, or 500 years?"  
"Is there something we can invest in that won't wear out 500 years from now?"

Is there a central idea or purpose that can stand the test of time?  
To be honest, the overall vision is not new or unique to Highlands, because we didn't invent the church.

There are any number of things that a church will, and should be, engaged in, but there is one central Mandate or organizing Vision that we must not ignore:

Jesus gave some instructions to His followers concerning what they were to do.

[18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV).

That was the 2000 year Vision Plan of Jesus – it hasn't changed.

With this command Jesus gives the church her marching orders for the next 5, 500 or 5000 years– we are to make disciples of all the nations.

There is one imperative – 'make disciples'

There are three participial helpers or descriptors – going, baptizing, teaching

As we read these verses we also see the most obvious definition of a "disciple" – One who is committed to following what Jesus taught.

This brings into play the importance of an often overlooked “ology”. Remember those from school – “the study of” – biology, geology, sociology, etc.

In the spiritual realm there are others – theology, Christology, Eschatology, and the overlooked, **ECCLESIOLOGY – the study / doctrine of the Church – the ‘ecclesia’ or called out ones.**

If we are to give Jesus his rightful place, then we must acknowledge Him as the head of the church. If we are going to love Christ, then we must love His Church.

**Eph 1: 22 And God put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

Eph 5:23; Col 1:18, 2:10

**Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.**

The church, the people of God by faith, the called-out ones are designated as the “Bride of Christ.” (Rev 19:7; 21:9; 22:17) Jesus has a special relationship with His Bride, the church, and the church has a special role and assignment in the world – To Make Disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching one another to observe all that Christ commanded.

As we understand scripture and the gospel, we know that we can only do this as we walk by faith moment by moment in the power of the Holy Spirit

Following this command of Christ flows from a heart and life that are feeding on Christ. The reality is that it is hard to learn how to feed on Christ and grow in grace and faith by ourselves. Even regular church attendance and involvement in activities won’t normally bear the fruit of a maturing and equipped follower of Christ.

**So OUR 500 YEAR MISSION is that WE meet people where they are and help them grow as Maturing and Equipped Followers of Christ.**

This means that You, may be unchurched, dechurched, angry at church, a skeptic, or a firmly convinced believer, and you have a place here at Highlands. We hope that this will be a place where your journey will take you to a fuller appreciation for all that God is for us IN CHRIST.

It is an ongoing Mission for us as a church, just as it is ongoing for us as individuals to grow as Maturing and Equipped followers of Christ.

Often in our circles, pastors hear the question, “What do you offer for “mature” believers”?

The temptation is to start talking about our theological emphasis, our studies of the “deeper” truths (as we define them), or our in-depth bible studies. **THERE’S NOTHING WRONG WITH ANY OF THEM**, but let’s not kid ourselves – we’re not fully “mature” in this life. We are maturing.

Over the years, when I’ve read articles or had conversations about “things offered for mature Christians” I’ve rarely heard talk about the role of evangelism or disciple making, yet two things Jesus clearly states are: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men (and women)” and “Go make disciples of all the nations”.

If those aren’t part of our “maturity package” then we aren’t following Jesus like we should.

<<But, but, but... I don’t have those gifts, I don’t have time, I’m not wired that way, etc>>

Those statement assume that it must all look the same for everyone - FALSE-. God has called and equipped, and strategically place YOU in a sphere of influence (oikos), and He'll use you in ways that will fit who He has made you to be..

### WHY THIS REFOCUS ON OUR MISSION?

Are we talking about programs? Isn't it really just about going to church? NO.

**IT'S REALLY ABOUT A BIGGER VISION FOR CHANGED LIVES** – not simply coming to church JUST for the sake of it.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost because he wanted to give them LIFE – abundant life – eternal life.

Pardon for sin – from God

Power to repent to others - Renewed or restored relationships

Power over sin – NOT sinless, but REAL change (how many have seen substantial change in areas of your life? Drugs, language, greed, ensnared by lust of the flesh, sexual brokenness, racism, prejudice, addictions, anger, self-centered focus, bitterness, grumbling, laziness, being easily offended etc, etc.)

New sense of purpose in life – that was so true for me

New sense of joy-

Power to forgive-

That's what Jesus is about. He is a life-changing ABUNDANT LIFE PROVIDER, and He calls us to be His ambassadors in that mission.

Being a part of Highlands means that you are engaged in something bigger and more significant than just “coming to church”. We want you to see how YOU FIT into what God is doing to CHANGE LIVES for His Glory and our good.

**Our 500 YEAR MISSION explains how everything we do should be viewed from the Lens of Making Disciples – followers of Christ who are being transformed and are becoming agents of change in their own sphere of relationships.** No matter what your “job” is, you are called by God to be His representative. There are no little people or little jobs. There's no place for “I'm just a \_\_\_\_\_” when we are living for God's glory and with His help.

Discipleship is a big word that covers a broad scope of growth activities and environments, but an Intentional life- on- life environment through small groups is the most effective for promoting change.

**Circles are better than rows for cultivating deep life changing relationships.**

The strategy of Jesus was “as you are going make disciples”, so that needs to be the ministry priority. If the hub of our ministry vision wheel is “making disciples”, then every involvement that men or women have with the church should be described in terms of that vision.

A part of the Biblical Vision is that growth can be “intentionally organic” – like a vineyard or garden. Scripture (Psalm 1) describes the growing believer as a tree planted by water that bears fruit in season. Let's break this down

### ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT

As we think about growth as maturing and equipped followers of Jesus remember these three key words – **ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT.**

– those are three vital relationships for Christian growth, so they become the focus of our discussion. We need the REMINDER, so I'll explain.

**ROOTS – Spiritual Roots with God**

The roots determine everything and everything flows from the roots.

**THIS IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR MISSION – to lead people in a growing relationship with God.**

Nothing is more important to the life of a tree than its root system. The MATURE AND EQUIPPED follower is one who sinks his/her roots deep into God through embracing Christ and a life of personal and corporate worship. This relates to the reality of INTIMACY WITH God (John 15 ABIDING).

Jesus is the perfect example of this – he “often went off to pray”; his heart was saturated with the Word of God; He came to do the will of His Father. Jesus was characterized by a pursuit of God, and the same Holy Spirit who was in Christ is in those who know him by faith.

**BRANCHES-** the image of the tree indicates branches that push out – toward believers and non-believers. Connecting with other believers is vital for our growth. You need them, and they need you.

The rivers of living water within enable our branches to push out to unite with the branches of other believers. It was the unexplainable love among believers in the early church that had such a striking impact on those around them. One early pagan emperor noted, “These Christians love one another before they’re even acquainted.”

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, those branches also grow to reach out to the end of the earth – Acts 1:8

**FRUIT – The tree rooted in the living water of Christ, with growing branches, will also bear FRUIT.** Those who ABIDE will bear fruit – Jn 15:5.

Fruit is anything that represents the tangible outflowing of the indwelling Christ. It is His life spilling out through us before God, others, and the world. What is given to us, flows through us. Such fruit is DIVINELY PRODUCED; we don’t produce fruit, we BEAR fruit.

Today’s REFOCUS is a good time to look at community groups,

All groups meet today and then beginning next week for 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Three groups. For 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> the Fenn/LeMay group

Take a couple of weeks and check them out and then get plugged in by Sept 15<sup>th</sup>.

As we get back to Mark next week, we’ll see **something else that we won’t see in Heaven.**

**Deliverance for The Lost who are held captive**

In HEAVEN, We will no longer be held captive

For NOW, **We must have EYES TO SEE THE WAY God SEES, so we’ll have hearts to Seek what God Seeks.** Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

This means that we can’t do church in the typical way, which is a “feed me” and “give me” mentality.

We must create a mentality of “make me, change me, deploy me”.

Aren’t you glad that Jesus did say, “I just want to stay here in heaven where things are good. I’d rather not take on human nature and be made sin and die for that lost race of human being. They made a mess of things, so let them clean it up.”

He cried, “Not my will, but Thy will be done. Father forgive them, they know not what they do. It is finished.”

**While His work of redemption is finished, our Mission of making Maturing and Equipped Followers of Christ is still going on.**

His work is displayed before us here at the TABLE.

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