

*Introduction:* I listened to a couple of podcasts put out by the Harvard Business Review over Christmas, not because I'm particularly smart like most of you, but because some of the insights are especially relevant to leadership and ministry. One of the episodes was titled "The Right Mindset for Success." It was an interview with Carol Dweck, a professor at Stanford University, and covered some of the basics of her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.

Her basic premise is that people basically have either a fixed mindset (where people believe their basic qualities, intelligence, and abilities are fixed traits. People have a certain amount and that's that) or they have a growth mindset (they believe all of our talents and abilities can be cultivated and grown over time through experience and mentorship).

The New Year is a great time to ask ourselves if we have a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. What about you?

FCF: Whether we realize it or not, so often we are content with a "fixed mentality." We fail to dream and see God's best for us.

God invites all of us to something more! Something better. Something deeper. If you are thinking, "No thanks. I'll settle for something a little more commonplace, a little closer to mediocrity." RHC is probably not the church for you, and much more importantly: Jesus is probably not the God for you because his job is to transform people to be like him. And if you have never really thought about it: that is a mammoth undertaking. It is a job only God can do!

As our pastors have prayed and dreamed about what we want to see God do in 2015, we have one simple description we pray will be true of Redemption Hill Church. This year, we want to see God mold us into

The Point: **"A Community of Mature Disciples Courageously Engaged in God's Mission."**

That is what we are after. When someone asks you, "*what is the focus of your church?*" Here's your answer: We want to be "A community of mature disciples courageously engaged in God's mission." Well, *what are the pastors up to these days?* They are working to see God transform our church into "a community of mature disciples courageously engaged in God's mission." *Why do you do what you do? Worship on Sunday, Community Groups, Serve the City, Give so much \$ away?* Well, it's because, we are striving to be . . . you got it: "A community of mature disciples courageously engaged in God's Mission."

Let me break this down real quick as a preview:

- When we talk about Community, we are referring to the church, the people who follow Jesus.
- Which explains the next phrase: a disciple is a follower of Jesus. Not a fan. Hey, Jesus is a nice guy, good teacher, we should pay attention to him. No Jesus is God. He rose from the dead. He is the greatest treasure anyone could possess.
- As those who are following Jesus, we are to be courageously engaged in God's mission.
- And what is God's mission? To see more people who are currently not in step with God become – you guessed it – "mature disciples courageously engaged in God's mission."

Now. How are we going to see this happen? What is the strategy? Here it is: simple, but I believe it's strong. We are going to LOVE. We are going to BUILD. We are going to GROW.

**"Love. Build. Grow. 2015 Vision Sermon"**  
**Ephesians 1:1-6:24**

As I unfold the details of our 2015 vision, I am going to simultaneously introduce the Book of Ephesians. For the next 23 weeks, minus a three-week break for a sermon series on “The Cross” around Easter, we will be swimming in the treasure of Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, which is tailor-made to teach us how we can effectively Love. Build. And Grow as God’s people.

- Klyne Snodgrass said: "Pound for Pound' Ephesians may well be the most influential document ever written." Let’s look at the first verse of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

*T:* Look at 1:1

A few notes here. We see the author is Paul. Paul was once a persecutor of Christians, gladly seeing to their imprisonment and even death. That was the case until Jesus confronted him with a blinding light on one of his persecution missions. He changed his life in that moment and gave him a new mission to be his witness to the world. Paul then became the greatest missionary the early church.

In an ironic twist, Paul actually wrote this letter from prison, probably in Rome. His audience is a group of Christians in Ephesus where he had spent nearly three years proclaiming the gospel. Due to the general nature of the content and style of Paul’s letter, many scholars believe this letter was passed around to the churches in the area surrounding Ephesus.

Verse 1 says these Christians are called “saints” and “faithful in Christ Jesus.” Now, I want you to zoom into these words right here. These people and all Christians today are “IN CHRIST.”

- The life of Paul was dominated by these two words. His life was “IN CHRIST,” and those two words really sum up the book. That is why we are titling our series through Ephesians: “IN CHRIST.” Paul uses this phrase or a similar phrase 39 times in this short letter.
- To be ‘in Christ’ refers to how Jesus followers are personally and fundamentally united to him.
- Look at *Verse 3*.
- Now look at *verse 9*. God’s eternal plan is to unite all things, sum up all things “in Christ.”
- We can summarize the Bible and all of history by saying: God made a perfect world. We broke it through turning from his perfect plan, but now God has brought it back together through Jesus. Everything will be completely healed because of Jesus.
- This is why Peter O’Brien says: “Cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ are the central message” of Ephesians (O’Brien).
- Everything is summed up IN CHRIST, and that is why these two words should dominate our lives.

When we dwell in Christ, we will be ready to fulfill this vision to Love, Build, and Grow, so that we can be “a community of mature disciples courageously engaged in God’s mission.”

As we work our way through this vision, I want to encourage you to ask yourself one question: **What commitments does God want me to make so that he can perform his great work in my life?**

With each piece of our vision, I am going to suggest some commitments you might consider making as we strive to own this vision as a church, but please don’t feel limited to my suggestions. Then next Sunday we are going to have a time for us to commit these commitments to God. So please fill out the Commitment Cards you have in your worship guide today or sometime this week and bring it back to worship next week.

*T:* First, let’s look at our call to

## I. LOVE.

The first three chapters of Ephesians 1-3 cover what God has done for us. They are theological in nature. The next three chapters address how we should live in light of what God has done. They are practical in nature.

One of the dominant notes of the first three chapters is God's great love.

- We have been loved. Chosen, predestined, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, given grace, and an inheritance, and the list goes on. His great love has saved us (2:4-5) and has triumphed to such a degree that it brings together people who could not stand each other and makes them one (2:11-22).
- And Paul wants us to know this love . . . Look at Ephesians 3:17-19: "Rooted and grounded in LOVE..."
- We will never truly love until we understand how much we are loved!

### **Love God with an unrestrained passion for his glory.**

- This is where everything begins. When we love God, all other loves fall into place.
- Our greatest desire must be for God and his glory.
- This should be revealed in our daily worship of God. Whatever we're doing: working, eating, sleeping, hanging with friends and family, it's all for him!
- It should also be revealed in how we approach worship on Sundays. Do you eagerly anticipate our times together? Do you love to seek God through prayer, hear from God in his Word, experience the joy of being in the presence of other imperfect people who are trying to follow God?

### **Commitments:**

- **I will prioritize weekly worship in order to behold the glory of God with RHC.**
  - "I've got to be there attitude." Unless I'm out of town or sick, I'm there.
  - *We are adding a couple of special Worship nights for us to come together outside of Sunday*
- **I will strive to live for God's glory, not one day, but everyday of the week.**

### **Love one another by active participation in Community Groups and covenant membership.**

- The Book of Ephesians has much to say about the importance of the church and the unity of the church. It shows us how *God designed us to need one another.*
- Chapter 2 talks about how God is building the church into a temple in him, a place where he is worshiped.
- Get ready for this highly intellectual argument! If a building is not held together, it cannot grow. What is more: if a building is not held together, not is it hindered from growing, it is in danger of falling apart. But Christ is our cornerstone.
- We do not simply connect for connecting's sake. Our partnership is defined by the gospel.

### **Commitments:**

- **I will visit a CG at least three times**, and if you find it spiritually profitable (and you will!), you will commit to being a part.
- **I will pursue covenant membership at RHC.** That may mean signing up for our Feb 8<sup>th</sup> Connections Class. For some of you (and you know who you are!) need to fill out your membership intro form and get this thing done. ☺ You know we love ya.
- Here's a great one: **I will spend more time sharing meals with my church family.** Everybody's gotta eat. Ask any doctor and they will tell you. Why not do it together?

### **Love all people through communicating the Gospel with humble boldness.**

- Everyone needs to hear the gospel. It is our job to display the gospel by how we live, but also declare the gospel by what we say.
- We want to do this with *Humble Boldness*
  - Humility: Love takes the backseat.
    - Others before ourselves
    - The Glory of God above all. Not our glory. His.
  - Boldness: Love moves past awkward.
    - We need to have some audacious courage that says, I am going to move past the fear of this moment, and at any cost to myself, I am going to tell this person the greatest news they could ever hear.
    - Boldness carries with it great expectation.

### **Commitments:**

- **I will tell someone about Jesus at least once a month.**
- **I will regularly invite and bring friends to Sunday Worship, Connecting Events, and Serve Opportunities.** This year was awesome. We saw around 200 friends brought by other friends. Let's see even more this year!

*T:* Does love drive everything you do? Love is the Great motivator. **“Let all you do be done in love.” (1 cor. 16:14)** Love must drive our every action, and our action is the focus of the second piece of our vision as to how we are going to become “a community of mature disciples courageously engaged in God’s mission.”

## **II. Build.**

Look at Ephesians 4:11-16

- God gives gifted leaders to the church. Why? So they can do all the work? NO!!
- Why? “To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for *building* up the people of God.” To equip means to “supply what is lacking” We equip by teaching and training and modeling.
- Who’s building?
  - Everyone - “the saints”
  - You say, that’s your job. Nope. God said, it’s our job. We all work for the good of all.
  - Someone has once said, **“As a church grows, so does the number of its passengers.”**
  - When I fly on a plane, I’m a passenger, not the pilot. I have nothing to do with us getting to our destination in a safe and enjoyable manner. I can take a nap. I have no responsibility. I am simply along for the ride.
  - Jesus has no category for that! We are all in the game. Not passengers but PARTICIPANTS.
- Why we need building
  - Because we are all a work in progress! That is what we are building. We are building up one another as God works through us.
  - I need you, and you need me. This whole vision implies our need for progress

### **Build by prayerful dependence on God and daily saturation in his Word.**

- One of Paul’s favorite terms for the Christian life is “walk.” It describes how we live each day. Normal living...
- Throughout Ephesians we will be instructed to . . . Walk in good works 2:10; Walk worthy 4:1; Walk In holiness; Walk in love 5:2; Walk as children of the light 5:8; & Walk in wisdom 5:14.

- The rhythm of daily prayer and daily Bible intake is absolutely essential to our Christian life, our daily walk.
- How would your life look different if you saturated yourself in the Bible this year?
- We are also going to provide more opportunities for strategic prayer and fasting as a church family this year.

**Commitments:**

- **I will practice the Rhythm of Word and Prayer in my daily devotions.**
- **I will engage in one-to-one Bible reading with a friend.** You say, “Tanner, I don’t know what that is.” It’s basically getting together and reading the Word together, but don’t fret. You can take advantage of an equipping opportunity coming in the near future where we will help train in you how to read and study the Bible no matter who you are with. ;)

**Build by taking advantage of equipping opportunities throughout the year.**

- Every person has a role to play. That means everyone needs to be equipped.

**Commitment:**

- **I will participate in Equipping Classes, Seminars, Coffee Houses, and other special trainings.**
  - Equipping Classes
    - FPU
    - Parenting Seminar?
    - One Day Seminar on Select Topic(s)
  - Coffee Houses
    - Holistic Discipleship
    - “Biggest Coffee House Ever”
  - Looking into using technology . . . (Blog, video, etc)

**Build by using our God-given gifts to serve one another as we serve our city.**

- God has gifted you....; you have skills, passions, experiences that you can use for God.
  - *Local Serve Medford Efforts*
    - *Easter Egg Hunts*
    - *Soccer Nights*
    - *Serve Medford*
    - *Medford Community Day (other Community Events)*
    - *Fall Festival (new!)*

Multiply Volunteer Leaders and Servants. –

You may have a couple of hours a week that you can donate to the church (“Liz” story)

**Commitments:**

- **I will joyfully participate on a Sunday morning Serve Team.**
- **I will volunteer discretionary time to serve our city and meet needs in the church.** You get discretionary, right? You get to decide what you do with it. I’ll redeem it or waste it.

Listen, if you’re going to build, you should know that it’s going to take some courage. Why? Because there will be opposition. Internally, we will become lazy and selfish. Externally, we will face detractors and distractors.

- Paul knew this. Acts 19 – while in Ephesus
  - Sons of Sceva – Adversaries
  - Demetrius – Adversary

- City Rioting – Adversity
- “But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective WORK has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” (1 Cor 16:8-9)

T: Over time . . . When everyone Loves, and everyone builds, what is the result? Everyone Grows. Growth is the natural consequence of building.

### III. Grow.

#### **Grow to increasing maturity in Christ through gospel-motivated obedience.**

- Jesus is the standard. *He is the goal!* We are being remade into his image.
- Jesus is the measuring stick. The yahd stick. He is the standard. . .
- *He is also the means.* It comes through him. His work motivates our work, and his Spirit empowers us for every task.
- Ephesians teaches us that we should: “forgive one another as God in Christ forgave you.” (4:32) “Walk in love, as Christ loved us.” (5:2)
- We are not content if people are not moving toward maturity (greater Christlikeness one step at a time), because God is not content with anything less.
- Here’s one simple commitment . . .

#### **Commitment:**

- **I will welcome the encouragement and accountability of others at RHC.** Again, this is primarily going to happen through serving together, involvement in CGs, and covenant membership.

#### **Grow in managing our time and finances with joyful generosity.**

- Does your calendar give you fits? How are you going to get it all in? Look at Ephesians 5:15
- What about your finances? Last year we had a goal of \$250,000. We are going to finish just over \$253k. This year we have bumped that up to **\$312,500.**

#### **Commitments:**

- **I will contribute systematically and sacrificially to see RHC reach our \$312,500 goal.** That may mean you need to re-listen to our Treasure series and start living on a budget. Move up a stage of maturity . . .
- **I will ruthlessly eliminate time wasters and give myself to eternal matters.**

#### **Grow by making disciple-makers corporately and personally in Medford and all the earth.**

- Do we want to see more people coming to RHC on Sundays? YES! Why? Because we want to see more people becoming followers of Christ.
- After reading through this letter (which I would recommend in one sitting), someone may say, “There’s no Great Commission in Ephesians to make disciples. Relax!”
- Well, Paul is fulfilling the great commission. That is why he’s in prison. The Ephesians are a result of the Great Commission!
- As churches grow, they slowly turn inward. But we want to continue having an outward-perspective in everything we do. We do not exist for ourselves. We want to see people who are far from God brought back to him.
- Last year, we saw more people become new followers of Jesus than ever before.
- Because we expect that to happen again, we are going to better equip more of you to be ready to take a new follower of Jesus under your wing and mentor them by saying, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

- It should be our everyday expectation that new people are deciding to follow Christ and new people are stepping up to say, "I'll help you out with that."
- If we are not expecting it, we probably won't experience it.

***Commitments:***

- **I will be mentored by someone more mature than me in Christ.**
- **I will be equipped to mentor someone newer in Christ.**
- **I will take vacation time to go to Toronto or India to serve the nations with the gospel! Let's go!**

***Conclusion:***

Can you imagine what your life will look like when you own this?

What commitments to Love, Build, and Grow are you ready to make over the next five months? I want you to take that commitment card and write down ways God is leading you to own the mission together.

Can you imagine what our church will look like when we get 200+ people owning this thing?

Look back at Ephesians 4:16: "from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, *makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*"

**Commitment takes Courage.**

- To confront our flaws.
- To say no to other good things.
- To step out in faith...
- To open ourselves to accountability.
- To get up when you fall back. To persevere when you fail.
- To ask for prayer. To say, "We need help. We can't do this alone."
- To follow Jesus into the great unknown. What else is faith?
  - It's known to him.

Will this vision happen? Why wouldn't it happen?

**"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21)**

We are going to sing two songs . . . Of praise and commitment. We are going to confess that Jesus is everything to us. All that we need is found in him. Then we are going to confess our faith in the ability of God to accomplish his great work in us and through us because of his great power

*Prayer.*