

**2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters**  
**Sermon Series - Focus On What Drives Us**  
**Sermon Title - Focus On Vision**  
**Sermon Text - 1 Peter Chapters 1 & 2 (Selected Verses)**  
**Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry**

“You give life, You are love, You bring light to the darkness  
You give hope, You restore, Every heart that is broken”

Thank God He gives life, He is love, He brings light to the darkness, He gives hope, and He restores broken hearts! And all of that is made possible by the life, the death, the burial and the resurrection of God’s Only Son Jesus Christ! When we put our hope, our faith and our trust in Him as our Savior, our lives are forever changed because we find purpose in life, a mission in life, and a vision for life in this world and for eternity! It doesn’t mean we won’t face tough and challenging things in this life, oh we will, but we know He’ll be with us every step of the way! Let’s pray and ask God to help us understand the vision He has for our church and how that vision applies to our lives as followers of Christ! Let’s pray!

So let’s review our “focus on what drives us” series thus far. We are driven by our Purpose which is...

“To see the One who gave His life for us exalted and the ones He gave His life for transformed!”

That’s *why* we do what we do! And we are driven by our Mission which is...

“Transforming Worship, People and the World!”

That’s *what* we do! And we are driven by our Vision which is...

“To raise up a healthy church that will impact the north shore and ultimately the world with the life changing message of Jesus Christ!”

That’s *what we hope to accomplish* through what we do!

A man by the name of John Richardson, Jr., made this statement in his book “Making It Happen.”

“When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened.”

Folks, with God’s help, we want to be the kind of people who make the vision happen! With God’s help, His strength, His wisdom, His guidance, and the power of His Holy Spirit, we plan on accomplishing our vision...

***“To raise up a healthy church that will impact the north shore and ultimately the world with the life changing message of Jesus Christ!”***

When we examine our vision we discover two main goals and the main ingredient for achieving those goals! Our two main goals are...

To raise up a healthy church!  
To impact the world!

Our main ingredient for achieving those goals is...

The life changing message of Jesus Christ!

This morning we are going to let one of Jesus’ disciples, the Apostle Peter, give us some direction on fulfilling our God-given vision. Our text is found in 1 Peter chapters one and two. In these verses we discover a blueprint for achieving our vision.

### **Goal #1 - Raise Up A Healthy Church**

*What constitutes a healthy church?* First of all we must remember that the church is not a building or an institution, but an organism made up of individual people who have come to faith in Christ! So a church’s spiritual health depends on the spiritual health of its members. Some churches focus on church growth and numbers, but at Northshore Church we try to focus on our purpose, our mission, and our vision and let God deal with the numbers! We track numbers as just one of the metrics to see if we are achieving our purpose, doing our mission and accomplishing our vision. But we believe if we focus on what drives us, our purpose, mission and vision, then the other things will fall into place. And a huge part of our vision is to raise up a healthy church. You know, if we’re healthy, growth will come. Churches that focus on growth sometimes become unhealthy, because they are so hyper focused on growing bigger, they may inadvertently do things to get the numbers up that may not glorify God! But churches that focus on being healthy, and glorifying God will grow! Some people say, “I just want to go to a good little church.” The problem is this, if it’s a truly good church it’s going to grow! So let’s look at the picture Peter gives us of what a healthy church looks like.

### **A healthy church is focused on the Grace of Jesus!**

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

A healthy church understands that it is by grace we have been saved in this life and have hope of eternal salvation when Jesus comes again!

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

Ephesians 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

A healthy church is made up of people who understand that we could never be good enough or do enough to earn God's grace! It is a gift that we receive when we call on the name of the Lord! Once we accept His grace we no longer have to fear the judgment that will come to the world when Christ comes again. Paul put it this way in Romans...

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Romans 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,

Romans 8:4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

### **A healthy church is no longer focused on the things of this world!**

1 Peter 1:14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

This doesn't mean that we are not tempted! This does not mean that a person who has just come out of the world and into grace, will not struggle and need help in overcoming the strongholds that once bound them and enslaved them. But with God's help, the power of The Holy Spirit and with the help of brothers and sisters in Christ, we grow, mature and are disciplined to become more like Jesus a little more everyday! The church should not be a place that shoots its wounded, but should be an infirmary that cares for and nurses the hurting back to health and in the spiritual realm that would equate to holiness and a restored relationship with God. Why would we want to be conformed to the evil desires we had when we lived in ignorance? We should remind ourselves of the truth we now know: those things only hurt, destroy, tear us down and divide us. They keep us from being all that God created us to be. In fact, Paul put it this way in Romans...

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

So just exactly how are we transformed by the renewing of our mind? Peter lets us know as he continues his instructions.

### **A healthy church is focused on becoming like Christ in holiness!**

1 Peter 1:15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;

1 Peter 1:16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

We are transformed when we change our focus! Did you know that who we are inside affects who we are on the outside! If we are focused on being holy and righteous in our thoughts and attitudes then it will affect our actions! I'm not talking about having a "holier than thou" kind of attitude, but a humble spirit of desiring to be pure and like Christ in the way we live! And remember this truth that one of my youth pastors told me years ago, and it was before the days of the internet, and cell phones. Pretty much just had tv, radio and books back then. I know I'm older than dirt! But here's what he said...

"Garbage in Garbage out!"

It's amazing how people are laser focused on eating healthier, reading the labels, and going organic, and I think those are wonderful, God-glorifying things, but it's amazing how so many of those same people seem totally indifferent or unconcerned about what they consume when it comes to their eyes, and ears! And those are gateways to our minds, our hearts, our spirits and that affects our mental, emotional and spiritual well being! The writer of Proverbs said this way back in the Old Testament...

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

And the Old King James Version put it this way...

Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

The absolute best way to become more pure and holy in your life is to seek to be more like Jesus in the way He lived, and by following His teachings. One of our next series' in our "Focus on What Matters" theme will be a verse by verse examination of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount! Our prayer life, our devotional life, our Bible study life with others and our worship life, will all have an impact on the way we live and this takes us to the next important thought we get from Peter...

### **A healthy church is focused on living a life of worship and for a good reason!**

1 Peter 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

1 Peter 1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,

1 Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1 Peter 1:20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

1 Peter 1:21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Such powerful words from Peter! Aren't you glad our Heavenly Father judges each person's work impartially? Our work for the Lord is something we were created to do, not something we do to earn salvation. Right after Paul had stated in Ephesians that we are saved by grace and not works, he made this statement...

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

And in Romans 12:1 Paul said...

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

In view of God's mercy we live our lives for Jesus! In gratitude, in thankfulness, and in worship! And Peter, in our text, explains what God's mercy looks like...

1 Peter 1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,  
1 Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

And folks, when we understand the price paid for us to have salvation and new life and eternal life, we should realize the important truth that...

### **A healthy church is focused on loving one another!**

1 Peter 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.

Peter does not say that a healthy church never has disagreements, or differences of opinions, but he says that we have sincere love for each other, deeply and from the heart! Unfortunately this is one of the areas that churches have struggled with down through the ages! We don't always know how to agree to disagree! I realize that sometimes differences in theology and methodology are so different that it becomes necessary to go different ways and that's why we have different denominations. That's really not a bad thing as long as we continue to love one another in Jesus and never get to the place where we think we're somehow better than everybody else. We are in fact all sinners in need of a Savior and without Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross we would all be lost for an eternity and would have no heavenly purpose, mission or vision. I know I said this a few weeks ago, but it bears repeating: The world is not going to know we are Christians because they see us attending church on Sunday mornings, but first and foremost by seeing the way we treat each one another in the family of God and then how we treat people in the world. Remember Jesus said...

John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Peter gives us one other really powerful insight into what constitutes a healthy church.

### **A healthy church is focused on growing in our understanding of God's Word!**

1 Peter 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 Peter 1:24 For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,

1 Peter 1:25 but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

1 Peter 2:3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

A healthy church is made up of people who hunger and thirst for the truth, the guidance, the wisdom, the peace and the awesome power that comes through God's Word! We desire to know the things of God like a newborn baby craves milk! I simply love the way the Psalmist put it in Psalm 119...

Psalm 119:10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:12 Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees.

Psalm 119:13 With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

Psalm 119:14 I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

Psalm 119:15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

Psalm 119:16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

And God's Word certainly teaches us how to achieve the second goal stated in our Vision Statement...

***"To raise up a healthy church that will impact the north shore and ultimately the world with the life changing message of Jesus Christ!"***

### **Goal #2 - Impact the World!**

Peter now speaks powerfully about the Church's calling, and God's vision for the Church to make a difference in the world!! God has included us in His plan of redemption for the world. He has called the church to partner with Him in changing the lostness of the world! We are to take the gospel, the good news of Jesus to a lost world. And while one of the primary ways we impact the world is by letting them see our love for one another, there are some other very practical ways in which we can have an enduring impact on the world. We already read this verse, but it is a very important part of our impact on the world.

## **Impact the world with our Example!**

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

I shared this in a previous message, but it is critical to our purpose, mission and vision that we understand that the world is watching us and maybe now more than ever before! God's Word teaches us to rid ourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind! The world is watching! How are we doing? I know we're not perfect, but we should be trying with everything within us and crying out for the power of The Holy Spirit of God to help us get rid of those wicked things because they hurt us personally, as a church family and they simply destroy our witness to the world! One of the number one reasons people give for not attending church is hypocrisy. Now I realize for some that is just a convenient excuse, but at other times hypocrisy is a real cause that some shy away from church. But let me just make this delineation: Being a sinner and realizing your need for help from God and from others and coming to church even though you know you've got issues is not hypocrisy. Church is like a spiritual hospital for sick people and it's okay for sick people to be in a hospital. Hypocrisy is when you know you've got sin in your life and you have no desire to change, but you want others to think you're living for God when in reality you are not even trying! And here's the thing, lost people are pretty good at sniffing out pure hypocrisy and insincerity and that is a total turn off. And we don't want to be guilty of that! In other words, I don't want my actions to keep someone from Jesus. Again, we're not perfect, but we should seek to do our very best to be genuine and sincere in living for Jesus so we don't turn people away! But let me say this: I do at times remind people who say they don't come to church because of hypocrites that there are hypocrites at Fremaux Town Center, restaurants, and Saints Games! And here's something to think about: If you are suffering from a medical emergency you probably wouldn't tell the EMT, "Wait, don't take me to the hospital, there might be a hypocrite in there!" There are hypocrites in every walk of life, don't let them keep you from worshiping your Creator God and enjoying fellowship with His children!

Peter later says this to Christians...

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.

1 Peter 2:12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

So we impact the world with our example, but we also...

## **Impact the world with our Witness!**

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—

1 Peter 2:5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

1 Peter 2:7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

1 Peter 2:8 and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

We come to Jesus, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him! Peter then says we are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. Priests are go-betweens, representatives. They represent people to God through intercessory prayer, and represent God to the people through sharing the gospel. Here's the deal: Not everyone is called to be a vocational priest or pastor, but every follower of Jesus Christ is called to be a representative of God to the world by taking the good news of God's offer of salvation, mercy and grace to the world! Some will reject the message, some will accept the message, but God's Word is clear that every believer in Jesus Christ has been called to by God to live their daily lives as a witness for Christ. Theologian Ray Summers put it this way...

"In this new temple the Christians constitute a holy priesthood for the purpose of rendering services to God. This is a basic passage in the cherished doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Every believer is a priest for himself before God. Every believer is also a priest for every other believer before God. He pleads man's case with God and he pleads God's case with man. As such he offers spiritual sacrifices."

Ray Summers, "1 Peter," in *Hebrews—Revelation*, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1972), 155.

He goes on to say this...

"Peter closed his use of the rejected stone theme by pointing to the dual nature of that stone. To those who believe and accept that stone which God has given, he is precious. As the Redeemer he becomes the foundation of God's new temple. But to those who do not believe and reject the stone, he becomes a stone of judgment. They stumble and fall when they come upon that stone in their path. Their stumbling and falling is because they disobey the word. The word which they disobey is the invitation of God to trust that stone, to make it the foundation for their lives. As they were destined to do does not mean that those who rejected Christ were destined to do so apart from any choice to do otherwise. On the contrary, the offer was made to them; the choice was theirs. They could accept the offer or reject it. To accept it meant a destiny of blessed union with Christ. To reject it meant a destiny of judgment apart from such union. It was their refusal to accept the offer which determined their destiny."

Ray Summers, "1 Peter," in *Hebrews—Revelation*, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1972), 156.

Peter then comes full circle and lets us know that we...

### **Impact the world with our Worship!**

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Can you think of a better way to impact the world than for them to see and hear and witness us declaring the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light? To testify to them that we were once lost, not a people, among those who had rejected the living stone, but are of those who received mercy and forgiveness and new life and eternal life when we confessed our sins and called upon the Name of The Lord for salvation. I love the way the Psalmist put it...

Psalm 62:1 Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.

Psalm 62:2 Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

And this takes us to our final point concerning our Vision as a Church...

To raise up a healthy church that will impact the north shore and ultimately the world with the life changing message of Jesus Christ!

Our main ingredient for achieving the goals of raising up a *healthy church* and *impacting the world* is none other than...

### **"The Life Changing Message of Jesus Christ!"**

And what is the life changing message of Jesus Christ? Peter lets us know at the end of Chapter 2...

1 Peter 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Peter 2:24 "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."

1 Peter 2:25 For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

And what if someone asks you how to be saved? What should you tell them? Well you could point them to this passage found in Romans 10:9-13...

Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Romans 10:11 As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

Romans 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

Romans 10:13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

How do we measure our success in accomplishing our vision? Are lives being transformed? Are people finding meaning and purpose in their lives apart from and beyond the material and worldly pursuits of this world? Are people who were once totally disparaging of life finding hope? Are people finding in us a family that cares about them enough to help them with their struggles, their hurts and their questions? Are we unapologetically yet lovingly proclaiming God’s truth with them and offering to walk with them as they discover God’s will for their lives? Are marriages being strengthened and restored? There are many, many metrics with which we can attempt to measure our success, but if we are seeking to be a healthy church, and we are willing to be a kingdom of God’s priests who are living our lives as holy sacrifices unto God then we will impact our world one heart at a time with the life changing message of Jesus Christ!