

2 Year Anniversary Celebration

2023 was an amazing year for City Hope. We saw God move in people's lives and that's what it's all about. I love that scripture there...**Psalm 126.3 | The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.**

There is nothing like experiencing God in your life. When we are able to know and do the will of God is when we have true joy in our hearts and lives.

As we celebrate our 2-year anniversary today, I think it's important to rejoice and celebrate and give God his proper glory for the things we were able to see him accomplish through you, His church.

Some of you were handed an envelope. You get to help us celebrate.

\$40,400 | Given to missions/benevolence in 2023

1856 | Opportunities to minister to CHC Kids

519 | Opportunities to minister to CHC Students

107 | Volunteers that served at City Hope

90 | People who participated in Small Groups

38 | 1st time Visitor families (filled out cards)

37% | Attendance increase from 2022 (from 8,013 - in 2022 to 10,985 - in 2023)

24 | Students made a decision for Christ at Beach Camp

22 | People baptized at City Hope

17.5 % | Giving increase since 2022

We give God honor and glory for great things he has done...City Hope, we must continue to be **1 Focused**. If there are people out there that are lost and hopeless, we have work to do.

This has truly been a remarkable year. But I still believe...**The best is yet to come**. God has blessed us, but we want to keep moving. I want more of that blessing. Not so we can brag, but so that we can reach more people. I believe we are going to see God work miracles in 2024.

Coming in 2024 | Counseling Ministry – Mission Trips – Community Projects – Discipleship – The Loop -

We rely on Jesus, but that doesn't mean we sit back and do nothing. We, as His body, have work to do. We need to grow. We need to be challenged. We need to take steps in our journey.

God can impact the world through CHC, that's me and you, if we adjust our lives to his activity.

So, what does that look like? Let me illustrate it like this.

Illustration: Box of Legos | There is a picture on the box. The picture gives you a vision of what it's supposed to be. When you start, it's in hundreds of pieces. You take each Lego and put it where it was made to fit and then the vision starts coming to life. It takes the pieces, to make the picture.

Sometimes as Christians, we get upset or frustrated because we know what the picture should look like, but it's not there yet. -----Tell somebody it's a process.

It's a process. In order for the picture to become reality, it's take the pieces being put in the right place.

Let's bring this back to our sermon today...**Once you've been reborn, you need to be reformed.**

Romans 12.1-2 | Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. ²Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

The Church is the body of Christ. The body is made up of many parts (people). Each part of the body has a function. I have to take personal responsibility to make sure I am functioning within the body, in the way God has designed me.

In other words, I have to know the vision (picture) God has for me, and make sure I'm doing everything I'm supposed to. I'm transformed when I renew my mind.

For some of you, that's your step for 2024. You need to renew your mind. Live your life with a vision from God this year.

Here is what I'm not saying...just think positive thoughts and everything will be ok. The Bible says, be transformed, that means be different that you are now....How? By renewing your mind, so that you can know Gods will for your life.

Ok...how do I renew my mind?

Colossians 3.1-2 | So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

So, the picture of what it's supposed to look like is from above. It's not going to be found in earthly things, but only in Godly things.

The personal picture that you and I receive from Heaven is Jesus. Jesus became human so that you and I could know the way.

John 14.6 |⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If Jesus is the way, then I have to get a clear picture of who Jesus was and is so that I can imitate Him completely.

The Bible is full of descriptions of who Jesus was/is. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John gives us personal testimony of the person and character of Jesus.

We have a pretty clear picture of what we should be striving after.

If you want your life to look more like the picture, then it's up to you to be more like Jesus.

7 ways to be more like Jesus in 2024

1. Hang out with sinners.

Jesus chose to eat with sinners because they needed to know that repentance and forgiveness were available. As Jesus' ministry grew, so did His popularity among the social outcasts of society. Once Matthew was part of His inner circle, Jesus naturally had more contact with the pariahs of His society.

Spending time with the tax collectors and sinners was only natural, since He had "not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2.17) His whole goal was for sinners to come to know God.

Lost people are always going to do lost people things. We, the church, the hands and feet of Jesus have to spend time with them.

The fact that Jesus ate with sinners shows that He looked beyond culture to people's hearts. Whereas the Pharisees disregarded people because of their past behavior, Jesus saw their spiritual need.

2. Upset religious people.

In Jesus' day, rabbis and other spiritual leaders enjoyed widespread respect and were held in high esteem in Jewish society. Almost everyone looked up to the Pharisees.

They were strict adherents to the Law, they were the guardians of tradition, and they were the exemplars of piety.

They avoided those whom they deemed “sinners”—those who did not follow their system of rules. Pharisees and the other religious class of Jesus’ day would definitely not have socialized with tax collectors.

When Jesus came and hung out with them, he flipped the whole system on its head.

Illustration: DNOW parent at Grace got upset we took the kids to clean up Lonsdale.

Don’t insulate from people who need God, incorporate them into your life.

3. Be compassionate, merciful, truthful, and generous.

In almost every story we read about Jesus we see his character revealed. He was/is compassionate.

Jesus had a *compassionate* nature. He had compassion on the crowds “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). Because of His compassion for them, He healed their diseases (Matthew 14:14; 20:34), and because of their hunger, He compassionately created enough food to feed large crowds on at least two occasions (Matthew 14:13–21; 15:29–39).

Jesus had a heart of *mercy* and *forgiveness*. On the cross, He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus was *honest* and *truthful*. He never violated His own word. He spoke truth wherever He went. He lived a life we could follow explicitly. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6). At the same time,

Generosity is at the heart of everything Jesus did. He gave his life, so that we could have eternity.

4. Take naps on boats.

5. Tell stories that make people think.

Jesus was the master storyteller. He’d say, “Hey, did you hear the one about...” and then tell a parable to teach a truth.

The Bible shows that storytelling was Jesus’ favorite technique when speaking to the crowd: “*Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable*” Matthew 13:34.

It's fascinating to watch how quickly a crowd tunes in whenever a speaker begins telling a story and how quickly that attention vanishes as soon as the story is finished!

Jesus also spoke in simple terms that normal people could understand. He didn't use theological jargon. It's easy to complicate the Gospel, and of course, Satan would love for us to do just that. There is an old church saying that goes...every number has a name, every name has a story and every story matters to God.

Your story matters to God and it might be the thing that helps bring someone to him.

6. Give people hope.

Illustration: During World War II, six pilots took off from an aircraft carrier in the North Atlantic to scout some enemy submarines. While they were gone, the captain of the carrier was forced to issue a blackout alarm. The ship went totally dark. When the pilots tried to return, they could not find the ship. They radioed, "Give us some light, we're coming home." The ship's radio operator replied, "Order: blackout. I cannot give you light." In turn, each pilot desperately radioed the same message: "Just give me some light and I'll make it." Each time, the operator had to radio back, "No light—blackout!" Because there was no light on that ship, six young pilots went to their graves in the icy North Atlantic (adapted from, Paul Tan, Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations [Assurance Publishers], # 5366).

We live in a dark world that desperately needs light. The birth of Jesus Christ, who is God's salvation, brought the light that offers hope to a world of despair.

Through Christ, we have hope for the future — that we will be redeemed. Hope for the present — that we are not alone, but are loved and have purpose. Hope even over the past — that our failures are not greater than God's power to transform.

When we as believers speak of hope, we don't mean a desire that may or may not be fulfilled. No, our hope is certain. Our hope for forgiveness, for reconciliation with God and a perfect, holy, eternal life, rests on the finished work of Jesus.

So many people live the way they do because they have no hope.

7. Pray...ALOT.

Jesus was/is a man of prayer.

Prayer was a crucial part of Jesus' life, not a supplement to his ministry on earth. As believers, we know that prayer is crucial. Unfortunately for many of us, prayer is gradually becoming supplemental in our lives. It is easy to justify the lack of prayer by the busyness of our lives, jobs, family, and kids.

All this can really overwhelm us to the point of just barely squeezing a three-minute prayer at bedtime as we doze off to sleep.

Jesus was both a man of prayer and a model for prayer. His ministry began with prayer, he prayed before important decisions, he prayed in the midst of his ministry for perseverance, he prayed on the Cross, and he prays for us today.

His disciples saw how important prayer was in the life and ministry of Jesus and integrated it in their lives.

Prayer was not only the starting base for the ministry of Jesus, but also what continued to sustain and connect him to his heavenly Father as he demonstrated his power through his Son.

It is mission critical to take time out and come to our Father in prayer as we are in the midst of serving him in ministry and anything else for that matter.

Conclusion:

We have the picture...Jesus. Now it's up to us to take steps in the process.

Let's renew our minds in 2024. Let's strive to be like Jesus and watch Him do mighty things in the lives of the people around us.

The Bible describes Jesus as the cornerstone that His church would be built upon. He is foundational.

Once the cornerstone was set, it became the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction; everything was aligned to it. As the cornerstone of the building of the church, Jesus is our standard of measure and alignment.

Is Jesus the cornerstone of your life? Everything else will leave you wanting.

God has great plans for City Hope Church. God can impact the world through City Hope Church when we adjust ourselves to his activity.