

## HOPE, Part 1

I hope my life has purpose

When I was in college, I took a class on Greek Mythology. There, I learned about Prometheus.

Prometheus stole secret fire from Zeus and gave it to mankind, so to punish mankind, Zeus ordered the creation of a woman named Pandora. Because that's what you want to do when you punish man...you create a woman. Pandora was given a box and ordered to keep it closed. You've probably heard of Pandora's Box.

Inside this box were all kind of evils, that would eventually unleashed on the world. So, to open up Pandora's Box is to let out all kind of bad stuff. This box contained malice, sickness, disease, burdensome work, and hope.

Doesn't one of those things seem out of place? Why is hope in a box with malice, sickness and disease?

Hope is a powerful thing, but it can also be a dangerous thing. Because it's often not realized. Many people have hoped for something, only to hold out hope in vain. Many people have hoped for something, only to have it never happen. And in some cases, unrealized hope can cause us to become even more skeptical. What should be a positive thing, can quickly turn into a negative thing.

Think about the things that you hope for.

- Hope this relationship works out
- Hope my team wins
- Hope I pass this class
- Hope I keep my job
- Hope I find my job
- Hope the cancer goes away

We hope for a lot of things, that may or may not happen. But there is a deeper kind of hope. Not what you hope for, but who you hope in. See, many of the things you hope for will never happen. I want to challenge you to hope **IN** something much deeper. Here's how the Psalmist said it.

"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." - Psalm 43:5

Here's how the hymn writer said it.

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust  
the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*When darkness veils  
His lovely face,  
I rest on His unchanging grace;  
In every high and stormy gale,  
My anchor holds within the veil.*

*His oath, His covenant, His blood  
Support me in  
the whelming flood;  
When all around  
my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay*

The reason that purpose is important is because deep down, **you want what you do to count for something**. Nobody wants to work for 30 years for a gold watch. You want to do something that lasts. At the end of your life, you want to have been a part of something with significance.

Interestingly enough, Jesus told us exactly how to have real purpose in our lives. These verses come on the tail end of the sermon on the mount.

*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” - Matthew 7:24-27*

Culture, the economy, your job situation, relationships...they all may change. They all WILL change. But Jesus, his purpose and his mission remain the same. God never changes, and His mission never changes. Jesus said that he came to seek and save the lost, and that's still his mission today.

So here's the big idea: **By aligning our purpose with His purpose, we can have eternal significance**. If you want your life to be built on the solid foundation, you're going to have to attach your purpose to God's greater purpose.

I want to convince you that God's purpose through this church is worth your time, energy and money.

Our church is in a pretty pivotal place. I believe God has placed us in one of the best times ever for ministry. At three years old, we're on the verge of really doing something huge, or we will fade away. We must fix our eyes on the future, resisting the temptation to think we have arrived. 1,000 people attending on the weekend is just 1% of this county. As the pastor of this church, I'm not content to sit back and babysit those who are here.

A few months ago, I started thinking about what our next few years would look like. I did a lot of praying and dreaming. I pulled our staff together and we talked through a whole bunch of things. The result was a set of goals, and I want to share five of them with you.

## Goals for 2010

1. **Double our current funding for children and students.** As those ministries go, so our church will go. I am not interested in babysitting children or entertaining teenagers...those are sandcastles. I am interested in leading children and teenagers from where they are to where God wants them to be.
2. Do twice as much to serve the community. We're going to continue to do that through some big events like Christmas Eve Eve, the Egg Drop and our own version of VBS next summer. But we're going to go grass roots and push every volunteer team and small group in our church to serve in the community. Finally, we're going to organize something called Second Saturday. On the second Saturday of every month, you can just show up (with your kids if you have kids) and serve. We will handle all the logistics and have all the supplies.
3. Free up cash to do more ministry. When we moved into the House of Rock, we raised \$175,000 through a project called Redemption. However, the renovations really cost about \$300,000. The shortfall was made up because a couple of people personally loaned us money. These are not crippling debts, but they do cost a few thousand dollars every month. This is money that I would rather spend on kids, students and serving the community. I want us to be financially healthy, so part of this means paying off this debt.
4. Get serious about helping people take the next step via groups and Oak Leaf University. We have big plans for groups (primarily relational) and Oak Leaf University (primarily educational). We're going to use these two ministries to really equip people in their faith. The Christian life doesn't stop at the moment of salvation....we all must keep growing.
5. Launch a second campus in Canton, Georgia on our 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is huge! For more than a year, we've been working behind the scenes and praying about this opportunity, and the time is now. Canton is the town next door to us, and there are thousands of people who do not go to church anywhere. Many of you have friends and family in Canton and they would love to be a part of a church like Oak Leaf Church. So, we're going to basically duplicate what we do here over in Canton.

How is this going to happen? One word...EVERYBODY.

Listen to some more words of Jesus from that same sermon on the mount.

**"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. – Matthew 6:19-21**

Do not store up treasures on earth. Treasures are not bad...it's just that they do not last. What are you really doing that has eternal significance?

A few months ago, I went to a conference. And when I travel, I usually use Priceline to find a good deal on a hotel room. When I walked into the lobby of this hotel, it was a little questionable. And when I entered the room, my suspicions were confirmed. Do you know that old hotel room smell? It's hard to describe, but I smelled it.

And the bedspread was one of those paper thin, purple and green floral pattern kind of deals. It wasn't pretty.

I'm pretty much a prima donna, so I decided that this hotel room did not meet my standards. So I went to Target and bought a new bedspread and a set of sheets.

Don't judge me.

While I was at it, I went ahead and got a new shower curtain, since the one in the bathroom was pretty nasty.

And I had a Home Depot gift card that someone had given me, so I got a few gallons of paint and some rollers and painted the inside of the room. And since there was a phone book next to the Gideon Bible, I called a tile guy and had him re-tile the bathroom.

At the end of those two days, that hotel room was looking nice.

Do you believe this story? Of course you don't. Because you know that it's stupid to spend money redecorating a hotel room when you're only going to be there temporarily.

Yet how many of us spend all of our money redecorating hotel rooms...sending all of our finances to cover temporary needs. We're literally building sand castles on shaky foundations when we have the opportunity to invest in eternal markets.

I know it's tense when a pastor talks about money. But the reality is that ministry costs money. Some of you are fired up about those five goals. You're fired up about the plans for Oak Leaf Kids, and you're thinking "about time" when we talk about students. You're for Canton and you're for serving.

But if you do not give to those causes, your favor doesn't really count for much. I'm just being honest.

It's not right for 20% of the people in our church to contribute 80% of the finances. It's right for Christians, who have been here for a long time, to continue to leech the blessings off of this church while sharing in none of the responsibility.

There are a few people in this church who tithe, and you know what they are really doing...they are making your involvement here possible. God's people who believe in

God's mission need to step up to the plate. Those initiatives I mentioned earlier...we believe these are God-given, eternal things and we're going to sell out to them.

We all must play our part. We need everybody. Everybody needs to play a part. Here's the specific challenge...**give once, give regularly**

I want you give big on November 21/22. On this weekend, give as much as you can. Pray about it and ask God how much you should give. Because God blesses everyone differently, we may not all give the same amount. It's not about equal gifts; it's about equal sacrifice.

Some of you have been blessed, and you could give a substantial gift on this day. I would bet that 99% of our church could give at least \$100 extra on this day. You pray about it, and then take action.

Gift Level	Gifts Needed	Gift Level Total
\$5,000	2	\$10,000
\$2,500	4	\$10,000
\$1,000	10	\$10,000
\$500	20	\$10,000
\$100	100	\$10,000
TOTAL	136	\$50,000

I also want you to commit to give regularly in 2010. Regular giving is a sign of faith and trust. When you tithe, your financial problems become God's problems. If you don't give regularly, you don't have a money issue...you have a faith issue. Trust God.

And again, we're all at different places, so we may not all give the same amounts.

Gift Level	Gifts Needed	Annual Total
\$500 a month	5	\$60,000
\$250 a month	10	\$30,000
\$100 a month	30	\$36,000
\$60 a month	100	\$72,000
TOTAL	145	\$198,000

All those numbers add up to \$250,000. That's what we estimate all these goals will cost. That's what we believe God is asking us to do.

So, November 21/22 is commitment weekend. Bring your one time offering and bring your filled out commitment card.

I know what you're thinking...*Michael...this is hard...I can't afford to give more right now.*

Those that are not willing to attempt the impossible will never experience the unexplainable.

That's how you get purpose in life. **By attaching your purpose to His purpose, your life will have eternal significance.** If you want your life to have purpose, then start investing in things that have eternal significance.

Honestly, I get a different level of blessing than most people around here when someone is saved or baptized, because I know that my financial contributions had a part in that.

He's after my money, you're thinking. Nope...it's far worse than that! And God isn't after your money either. Think about it...if God wanted your money, He would just take it.

God is after your life. I'm out to convince you that your purpose is not to raise nice kids, get a nicer house, retire at 65...there is a much bigger purpose at work.

The hymn writer got it right.

Your hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but WHOLLY lean on Jesus name.

Are you fully, completely, 100% leaning and trusting on Jesus name. You can hope for stuff, and you may or may not get it. But when you put your hope IN Him, He will never let you down.