

INSIDE OUT
Knowing Why
John 1:22-30

Happy New Year! I am so excited to begin a new year with the people that I love the most. I am astounded that the year 2015 is over, but the new year ahead is as full of promise as it is of challenges for us. I want us to meet those challenges head on by claiming the promises that we have in Christ so that he can use us to bring hope to a weary world! Are you in?

Today, I want to begin the message by bringing your attention to our Ministry Resource Plan. Others may call this a budget. Now, I realize that some of you just went on the defensive and you are trying to figure out how to leave without being spotted! Fear not! If you are our guest today, and especially if you are NOT a follower of Christ, then you need to know that you have chosen a great day to be here. You do not need to be afraid that I am going to ask you for money or try to guilt you into giving something away! That is not how we roll. Instead, I am going to give you a front row view of what CHC is all about as I talk about our PURPOSE as a church. If you ever wondered why churches even exist in the first place, then I want you to at least hear the reason why THIS ONE is on this planet. My prayer is that it will challenge and intrigue you enough to bring you back again!

The first thing that I want to do this morning is to THANK all of you who gave to the ministry of CHC in this past year. I am so grateful for you. You made a huge difference in the lives of people by your giving. You giving says something about what you really believe. **You gave because you believe deeply that the Gospel changes lives in a huge variety of practical ways.** You gave because you believe in supporting the biblical, caring pastoral leadership that serves the spiritual needs of believers by helping them to grow in their faith. You gave because you believe in providing food, shelter, and clothing to people in our community as we share Christ with them. You gave because you believe in being a part of a strong community of faith that helps people find healing for their hurts, freedom from their addictions, and peace in their homes. You gave because you believe in investing in the faith and spiritual development of children and young people because they are the future! **I also realize that not one of you gave because you had to, but because you wanted to.** There is no such thing as a "Church Tax Bill" at CHC! It is all gloriously voluntary! Your tithes and offerings were simply WORSHIP gifts for the God who has blessed you in so many ways. **Your giving was also an act of OBEDIENCE that was driven by FAITH that the God who has blessed you will continue to do so even as he makes you a blessing to others.** He is faithful. **And it was an amazing year.** Your giving supported the ministers and the work at both of our campuses and in our online presence, and it made possible our mission works at home and across the globe. This year, you also fully PAID OFF the land note in Hernando, so that we can begin to move toward building our own facility for our Hernando Campus in the days ahead. We will talk about that more in the coming weeks. You also provided the money that

was used to update and improve our Southaven facility in a number of much needed ways. **In challenging economic times, you freely gave nearly 3 million dollars to support the work of the church! Thank you for your generosity!**

As you can see, our Ministry Resource Plan total amount for 2016 is the same figure that we had for our MRP in 2015. This is because we base our resource ROAD MAP on the money that we receive in the previous budget year. That is just wise financial planning. We do not want to set MRP figures that we snatch out of thin air. Of course, we hope to grow in our actual giving this year because we know that vision requires resources. But we will trust God with that. **We have made the decision that money WILL NOT drive us or determine what we do as a church; our MISSION and our VISION will.** We have so many opportunities to serve people in Southaven and Hernando (and wherever else God sends us!), and we are trusting our heavenly Father to PROVIDE for everything that he leads us to do. [Our Finance and Personnel Teams have been a great help to us in putting this MRP together for you to review and then vote on in two weeks.](#) You will have plenty of opportunities to ask any questions that you may have about this MRP during this time. You can stop by and visit members of these two teams at both our Southaven and Hernando campuses before and after the services next weekend, or you can email us at ministryresourceplan2016@mychc.tv at any time. The members of these teams will also be at our Southaven campuses on Tuesday night, January 12 from 6:30 P.M to 8:00 P.M. for those that would like to stop by and talk. Our goal is transparency and accountability. We want to steward every penny that is given for the ministry at CHC with absolute integrity and wisdom. Thank you for your trust.

Next week, we will also present to you the names that have been put forward by the church membership and staff for consideration in roles as deacons and as members of our Personnel and Finance Teams. These are men and women of great integrity and vision who believe deeply in what we do as a church. Please pray for them as they function in these roles if you approve them. We will vote on all of this together on January 24th. **Let's stop and pray over this MRP and our present needs before we continue on in the message today.**

I grew up in the south where there is a church on nearly every corner. They come in all shapes and sizes and brands. There were so many that I just took them for granted as a child. I seldom bothered to ask WHY these churches were even there in the first place. Nowadays, I find myself asking this question of "Why?" a lot as I pass churches all over the south. Sadly, I think that many of the people in those churches could not really tell you WHY they exist anyway. They just ARE. This is why so many of them have so little impact on this world anymore! In the last few weeks, I have done a lot of driving in the south and I have seen a lot of churches. Really, all I have seen is a lot of buildings. But buildings do not tell me about the real reason they exist, unless they have a really great sign out front (even though many of these are not so great). Just a few years ago, I passed one church in Memphis that had a sign that read, "Elvis could have worshipped here. Will you?" That ought to draw 'em in in droves, right? **Churches need more than a building and a sign. They need a**

compelling MISSION and a VISION that fills their heart with passion! Let's make this more personal. **Do you know WHY Colonial Hills Church exists on this earth?** Why do we have campuses in Southaven and Hernando, and an outpost in Bolivia? Why are we asking God to lead us to the places where he wants to establish other campuses as well? **Can you state our purpose for BEING?** I believe that we need to KNOW why we exist as a church, and then be so passionate about it that we cannot help but take what's inside OUT and put it on display for all to see! That is the theme and purpose of this series. We exist for one "WHY." I want to remind us what this WHY is, and HOW it MUST define all that we do as a church.

The church is made up of those who have been "called out" of their old lives by Christ so that they can experience NEW LIFE in him. In the New Testament, the word for Church is "**Ecclesia**," and it literally means, "**Called out ones**." This is just how the Church began. When Jesus first entered the scene in his ministry, a man named John the Baptizer INTRODUCED him to the world. Then Jesus asked those people who listened to John to follow him AND to invite others to come along with them. He created a "COME AND SEE" CULTURE! I love how the Apostle John describes the way that John the Baptizer introduced Christ in his first-hand account of the life of Jesus, and what happened afterwards. **John 1:26-29, 35-46 NLT**

26 John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. 27 Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal." 28 This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ... 35 The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. 36 As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" 37 When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" 39 "Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day. 40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. 41 Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ"). 42 Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John--but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter"). 43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." 44 Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown. 45 Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from

Nazareth." 46 "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.

These verses help to describe our mission as a church. It is entirely relational. It is about our relationship with Jesus, our relationship with each other, and our relationship with those who do not know Christ. When Jesus established his church, he made sure that the hope that he gave to his people did not stop with them. This is why he made this final statement to the disciples just before he went back to be with the Father. **Matthew 28:18-20 NLT**

18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. **19** Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **20** Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This is what every church should be about. Here is how I want to state this mission for us here at CHC.

Our MISSION is to bring hope to people by helping them to FIND and FOLLOW Jesus Christ.

If someone asks you why CHC exists, tell them this! We bring hope to people by helping them to find and follow Jesus Christ. We are not ashamed of Christ. We love him, and we want others to know and love him as well. He has changed us, and we want others to SEE those changes that he has brought about in our lives so that they can believe that there is hope for change in their life as well. **The CHURCH is the BODY of Christ, and we are called to put his life in us ON DISPLAY as we grow in our faith. We take what is inside out so that we can bring those who are outside in! That is what we do. That sums up our very reason for existing as a church.**

Our VISION then explains HOW we go about accomplishing our mission. You have heard me share our VISION for years now: Attracting Outsiders In, Building Insiders Up, and Serving: Inside and Out. This is the great challenge of the Church. **We must make sure we maintain a beautiful balance between REACHING OUT, GROWING UP, and HELPING OUT!** As a pastor, I must continually reinforce all three aspects of our vision in order to accomplish our mission. I believe deeply in studying and knowing the Scriptures, and I consider teaching our people the Word one of my most important duties as a Pastor. But I also believe that it is my great responsibility to help us stay focused on loving and serving those outside of the church so that we can create opportunities for sharing the most important message in the world with them! Since I became pastor here, I have strained to lead us to focus on REACHING PEOPLE who DO NOT GO TO CHURCH. I do not want us to fall into the closed loop of focusing only on KEEPING PEOPLE who already believe, but also on REACHING PEOPLE who do not YET believe. **I want us to be a circle facing**

OUTWARD. We exist on this earth to follow Christ and to help others FIND and FOLLOW him as well. Nothing else matters.

Just before Christmas, Lisa and I were at the Southaven mall behind Chick-Fil-A when I had an epiphany. The parking lot was full as people were walking in and out of the stores, and I was watching them walk by our car. Suddenly, a stunning reality hit me full in the face. With amazement, I asked Lisa to look at the people walking around our car. I saw an Asian man, an African-American couple, several Hispanic people, a white couple, an Indian family, and a Muslim woman dressed in a burka. There were at least 6 different ethnic groups walking around me at one time . . . in Southaven, Mississippi! I remember when I first moved here in 1989. Back then, I mostly remember seeing two primary colors around me: Black and White. Now, here I was looking at a beautiful rainbow just 26 years later. **Have you been paying attention? Our world is CHANGING because God is bringing the NATIONS to us.** I read a profound article just last week that opened with the statement: *If the community outside the walls of your church is changing more than your church is changing within her walls, then you are becoming IRRELEVANT!* Oh Church, I desperately want God to use us in ever-increasing ways in our ever-changing world right now. Some of these changes have been subtle, yet stunning; others have been swift and devastating. I have been watching our country change for the worse in so many ways over the last several years, and it has grieved my heart. But at the same time, I realize that all of these changes have made something else even more crystal clear: **Darkness makes the light shine brighter!** The beauty of Jesus Christ and his Word stands out in stark contrast to the actions of a sinful, selfish world that wants nothing to do with God. You see, the more that people try to establish their independence from God and live however they want to, the more broken and desperate they become. Yet, Jesus stands ready to REDEEM them from all of that broken mess if they will just come to him. *But there is a catch: They do not know how to find him. Someone has to INTRODUCE them to him.* I love how John the Baptizer said this: **John 1:26 AMP**

26 John answered them, "I baptize [only] in water, but among you there stands One whom you do not recognize *and* of whom you know nothing.

Jesus is present right now in this world, but we must not assume that people already KNOW who Jesus is and what it means to follow him. They DON'T; but they WILL if we show them and tell them. *Jesus Christ is THE only HOPE for the world, and WE have been saved and selected to share this truth with our world.*

Stop. Do you and I REALLY believe this? I wonder. I have been reviewing our history as a church in my mind again lately, and something has occurred to me. When we first began to really grow in the early 1990's, it was because we were reaching a lot of other church members who were dissatisfied with their church. We were the hot Church ticket in Desoto County. But when God shook us up with a movement of his Spirit in 1994, we began to really change. We decided to get real with one another about our true spiritual condition and needs. We started LIFE

GROUPS (we called them Shepherd Groups back then), and we urged our people to begin to TRULY live in biblical community with one another. We also began to look beyond the church walls at the UNBELIEVERS around us with new eyes. We began to look for ways to connect with them so that we could love them and help them to see what Christianity was really all about. And “Church people” left the church in droves! We lost over 700 people within two years of 1994. Amazingly, while we experienced great grief over the loss of some really good people in those days, we did not stay down in attendance; we grew! We saw some of the most remarkable miracles and answers to prayer that I have ever witnessed in my lifetime. We saw more people come to Christ and saw more lives changed than I could ever recount. It was awesome! **This was because our people really began reaching out to the lost community around us. Our Shepherd Groups prayed regularly for their lost friends and they invited them to church and to their groups. We shared our faith as we served our community. We did BLOCK PARTIES for our neighborhoods and we went on PRAYER WALKS so that we could pray FOR and WITH those who lived around us. Our growth in those years came because we were truly living in biblical community with one another AND we were investing in relationships with the UNCHURCHED so that we could introduce them to Christ.** And it was FUN! It was also WARFARE! It paved the way for us to lead many people to Christ over the next two decades. I am so grateful that God has used CHC to lead almost 2,000 people to Christ since the year 2000! But we are SLOWING DOWN. Have you noticed? This last year, we only baptized 80 people. While I am so happy for those 80 people whose lives are changed for eternity, I am saddened that I did not do more to win more people to Christ than I did this last year. How many times did YOU share Christ with others in the last 12 months? How intentional were you about inviting people to come to church with you so that they could hear about how Jesus really does change lives? How many times did you pray with someone outside of the church who was hurting and lonely? How will they KNOW him if we do not SHOW him to them?

This year, I want to make sure that every one of the people who call CHC their church home KNOW what we are doing and what part they must play in it. I want to clearly communicate the outworking of our vision in everything that we do. For instance, I want to train all of you in how to share your personal story of faith. I also want you to invite your unchurched friends to our services with the assurance that our weekend messages will be designed FOR believers . . . with unbelievers in mind. The early church met to learn the truths found in Scripture and how to live them out, but unbelievers were always present to hear what was being taught. This was a VITAL part of the growth of the church. You see, we are here to learn how the teachings of Christ apply to our lives in practical ways; but I will always speak this in such a way that those who are not familiar with the Word or with the Faith will clearly understand it as well. In fact, I want us ALL to do our best to insure that our unchurched friends feel wanted and welcome in our services and at our events. They need to know that it is our JOY to be with them! EVERY SUNDAY, I want us to create the kind of ENVIRONMENT that makes those who visit us from the outside want to COME BACK AGAIN . . . AND AGAIN! I want to passionately lead us to

ATTRACT OUTSIDERS IN. I want people who don't know how to find Genesis or Jesus in the Bible to be surprised and excited by what they see and hear when they come in these doors, regardless of their background, financial status, social standing, or color. I want CHC to look like A SLICE OF THE COMMUNITY in which we serve. **My audacious GOAL is for CHC to be the PRIMARY ENTRY POINT into the Faith for the UNCHURCHED people of Desoto County.** That is a tall order!

But we will never accomplish that vision if we do not stay deeply connected to other believers at CHC in life and in Life Groups. You cannot separate the components of our vision (Attract/Build/Serve) from one another. They fail when they stand apart. It breaks my heart to admit what I have seen over the last few years here at CHC. We have fallen so far from the original vision that God gave us of establishing small groups of believers who DO LIFE TOGETHER. In these groups, we meet together weekly in order to develop strong friendships with one another, to help each other grow in our relationship with Christ, and to challenge one another to reach out to the unchurched. This is so much more than just hearing a message on a Sunday morning. Sunday morning messages alone will never even be enough to change you; much less the world! **You see, the church was NEVER meant to be just a place where you received INFORMATION about God. It was designed to be a HUB of Christ-Centered RELATIONSHIPS!** Life change happens best in relationships. Ironically, we live in the most digitally connected age in history, and yet true relationships are at an all-time low. As a pastor, I realize that every one of you can hear preachers that are far better than me with the simple click of a button, and you don't even have to get out of your pajamas to listen to them! But simply getting information about God this way is ineffective by itself. You need a real COMMUNITY CONTEXT to live out what you have learned. You need others to hold you accountable for sharing what you have learned. You need prayer partners and mentors and friends who can do life with you. No computer can give you that! Please, I BEG OF YOU, choose to step into (or step back into) a Life Group this year so that you can be a part of fulfilling our mission and our vision as a church.

In the next four weeks, I am going to give us some very practical direction about HOW we can fulfill our mission and our vision. I want to challenge us all to some vital changes that we need to make. I want to call us all to prayer for our nation and for our community. I want to urge us all to move closer together so that we can move farther out. I hope that you will be here to hear what CHC is going to be all about in 2016.

Let's pray.