

## REFOCUS 2017

### Psalm 78:1-7 Passing the Torch

Intro: JFK “The torch is passed to a new generation;;; Ask not what your country...”

The IDEA of ReFocus is to take time to remember The Mission and Values of Highlands Church. I do this for you as a congregation because each year we have new people coming in. BUT I also do this for ME, because it helps me stay focused.

Three years ago at this time I laid out a **500 year Mission plan for Highlands**

Our mission is the reason our church exists. It's why WE'RE here. It's LONG TERM and it's BIG. I asked the question, “**If someone attends our church for 7 months what would s/he think is the MINISTRY priority / the organizing idea of Highlands?**”

“What do we want to see as the fruit of our labors over the next 5, 15, 50, or 500 years?”  
“Is there something we can invest in that won't wear out 500 years from now?”

**Is there a central idea or purpose that can stand the test of time?**

To be honest, the overall vision is not new or unique to Highlands, because we didn't invent the church.

There are any number of things that a church will, and should be, engaged in, but there is one central Mandate or organizing Vision that we must not ignore:

Jesus gave some instructions to His followers concerning what they were to do.

**Matthew 28:18-20 “Go and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you....**

**That was the 2000 year Vision Plan of Jesus – it hasn't changed.**

With this command Jesus gives the church her marching orders for the next 5, 500 or 5000 years– we are to make disciples of all the nations. As we understand scripture and the gospel, we know that we can only do this as we walk by faith moment by moment in the power of the Holy Spirit. We don't obey in order to earn points with God; we obey because we have been given a new heart and a new power. Because of the freedom and new life that come from Christ, duty becomes a joyful choice. We live and respond to God not as fearful slaves, but as beloved children.

**So the 500 YEAR MISSION for Highlands is that, as a church, Highlands meets people where they are and helps them grow as Maturing and Equipped Followers of Christ.**

This means that someone, even you, may be unchurched, dechurched, angry at church, a skeptic, or a firmly convinced believer, and you have a place here at Highlands.

It is an ongoing Vision for us as a church, just as it is ongoing for us as individuals to grow as Maturing and Equipped followers of Christ.

THIS YEAR, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT meeting the next generation where they are and helping them grow at Maturing and Equipped followers of Christ. . **Our calling is to Pass the Torch to the next generation.** Some are saying, “WE DID THAT ALL LAST WEEK – give us a break.”

YES, THANK YOU. But the reality is that the next generation is like my lawn in the summer – it needs attention for more than one week. AND MANY OF YOU DO HELP YEAR ROUND – THANK YOU.

Wouldn't it be great if YOU HAD MORE HELP??? Remember the Why?

-We are called to leave a spiritual legacy. PSALM 78:1-7 - we will, one way or another

Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,

3 Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us.

4 We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

5 For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children,

6 That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children,

7 That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments,

We are called to leave a spiritual legacy... so

WHAT IS A LEGACY?- Hamilton - "it's planting seeds in a garden that you'll never get see."

The reality is that you and I are doing things that will impact people who we may never know. We're doing things NOW, that will have an impact - positively or negatively:

EX: Kids you keep in the nursery may never come and tell you how much it meant to them

EX: Kids in VBS or SS won't come to you and say, "This will really help me be a better husband, wife, or parent - BUT ONE DAY IT PROBABLY WILL

EX: Ricky Bryan - years later, "I want to thank you for the time you spent with us in lunches at the High School and the other times you invested time in our lives."

Most of us will encounter things in life that require that we remember everything we've ever learned about god and the gospel, so it is a blessing to have that cup of knowledge filled at an early age.

Some of us live with painful regrets because we did things growing up that we may not have done had we been trained in living by faith in the grace of Christ.

Some of us were trained in it, but we strayed, AND THEN RETURNED because we were reminded of things we learned in early years.

What is the next generation?

Anyone who comes after you or behind you - in age or in a season or stage of life. It covers all of us. We all have someone coming behind us whether we are 80, 60, 40, 20, 15, etc.

WHAT IS THE TORCH WE WANT TO PASS? What will it mean to help the next generation "WIN"??

Is it simply a good education, job, house, spouse, kids; another house, another spouse and he who dies with the most toys wins. Some of you have tried that, and you don't feel like you've won anything.

A WIN is not improving a standard of living- "I didn't have cable TV until I was 20, or a cell phone til I was 40. Etc." nothing wrong per se, but as John Woodall put it, "IT is not about providing a Standard OF living, but rather a STANDARD FOR LIVING for the next generation."

The bible gives a standard, or a purpose FOR LIVING- God's glory and the proclamation of His Kingdom.

This idea of leaving a legacy is from the bible- EX:Psalm 78:1-8 / ps 145

This psalm, 78, written by Asaph, in court of David.

78:1-2 – this is ancient wisdom v. 3 “our fathers have told us”

This has been passed down and will now be passed to the next generation. Already we see multiple generations who have received this instruction or teaching. And the goal is to pass it along to their children, who will tell their children.

When it comes to fathers, some grow up without a father, and many have silent fathers; some are unraveling what your father said.

v. 4 Tell the next generation.

What has been told to you? What do you tell beyond the daily things- “get up, brush eat a good breakfast, clean your room, brush your teeth, study hard” etc

...v.4 mighty deeds of God.

v.5-6 – teach them

four generations of spiritual teaching- giving a standard for living, not standard of living

v. 7 then they would do teach and model...3 things THIS IS HOW TO PRAY FOR THE next generation...

put their confidence In God

not forget His might works

keep his commands.

OT LAWS

NT – love Jesus, keep my commandments

How do we PASS THE TORCH?

Choose to help the next generation

Don't wait to be recruited

Don't think you can't do it

We are made to receive and give – to be channels

Write Down What you've learned and can pass on

Don't repeat stupid mistakes

Big 5 roles in life – Life/self; Marriage; Family; Work; Church

Live out the Mission – be a model of one who is trusting God when you want to cash it in. in doing so we don't just help the next gen win, we grow as well. Prov 3:4-6

SHOW UP- write names on the card – who showed up for you?

Your best chance to have a positive influence in someone's life is to actually show up. EX:

Mentoring – Debbie Moberly (you can have a huge negative influence by not showing up – another sermon)

We don't always see the results at the moment.

When you establish a habit of showing up for others, it will change you as much as it will change them. When you start turning outward to others, it will stretch your faith.

We must change how we think about “influence.”

Influence doesn't simply come from power, or authority. There is another kind of influence- it comes from having their TRUST. It needs to be earned as you care enough to keep showing up. When people know they matter to you, you have a different kind of influence.

Showing up with the Gospel enables us to create a place of compassion, which is one of the most important things a church can do.

Are we perfect in that? No

But, more than any church I've known, this body has it in the DNA. We just need to move it forward. How? By recognizing our common wounds and healing and HEALER – Jesus.

The gospel teaches us ...bigger sinner than dare admit, ...dare imagine. This applies to others in the faith as well. When we believe and act on it, the gospel pushes us out toward others.

**“Never settle for a version of the gospel that doesn't move you to love someone who is different from you”, Northpoint – Reggie Joiner...**

I would add, “or move you to love someone you find difficult to love.”

Sometimes that loving will mean confronting, rebuking, and exhorting one another, but it should be done and received in love. – UPCOMING SERIES – NEXT WEEK – ONE ANOTHERING

**Never settle for a version of the gospel that keeps you in your comfort zone or promises a comfortable life – “the cult of the comfortable is the curse of the Christian.”**

Getting out of your comfort zone is where you'll grow –

EX: men I've called on to pray in a small group. They looked stunned but they did it, and they didn't die. My guess is that their souls grew in faith in doing it.

**You got an insert or space in the bulletin to write down names of influencers in your life – people who showed up for you.**

On the back side of the card, write the name of someone you should show up for. It may be someone in your marriage or family or in this room. Or it may be someone else that God brings to mind. The goal is to leave here with a person and purpose in mind.

THE ALTERNATIVE – PSALM 78:8

Here's the dirty little secret of the Christian life and of just about any church or ministry:

**You can attend for 2-3 years and you'll hear all the main things that any preacher has to say.**

He may preach it from different topics, books of the bible or themes, but it's not going to be a real secret about where he's going with it. Some pastors will be informative, some good bible teachers, some entertaining, some more formal and theologically “deep”, but **it really won't impact YOUR LIFE if you just soak in information and it doesn't lead to taking steps of faith in engagement, ministry and service.** Otherwise it is just SIT, SOAK AND SOUR.

I'm seminary trained and I love theology. I'm all about learning and having you learn. In my brash post-seminary days, I wanted to go to France and be the French RC Sproul. Of course, they already had one- 400 years ago- Jean Calvin, and I was not qualified, but I love studying the deep truths and mysteries of the faith. Some Christians and churches want to focus on the “deep stuff”- that's cool, but my question is, “What are you doing to do with it once you go deep?” If it doesn't move you the obedience of faith, working itself out through love, then it won't help you grow.

Will it help you love your wife and be a solid parent for your kids? Will it motivate you to be a messenger for Jesus, in your own way, with those around you? Will it lead to the obedience of faith in those deep dark corners of your soul and of your life? Will it give you a heart for the poor and the marginalized?

If you want to grow in Christlikeness, then you need to take what you already know and get out of your comfort zone and show up for someone, some group, or some area of service. That will stretch you spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and relationally. It will stretch your faith much more than just coming and sitting on Sunday. **Doing things that are uncomfortable are good for your soul.** Don't just stay in your comfort zone to grow; you've got to stretch outside of that

There are needs here at Highlands, but your outlet may end up being in the community or through some other organization. It certainly doesn't have to happen on this campus. It may not look spiritual or religious, but if you serve in power of the Holy Spirit according to kingdom values, God will use you to make a difference.

**Find where your passion intersects the needs of others, and SHOW UP.**

There are people impacting the next generation who aren't Youth or Children's ministry Volunteers, but they get involved at the point of their passion and interest. EX: Jim Burnett, Blake

HOW – keep eyes on Jesus, who was and is the perfect model of one who left His comfort zone and showed up for those who needed Him.

Maybe the first step is to get involved in a small group, a community group, an area of service and just show up as a participant. Along the way you will discover how God can use you and your gift set.

We're going to come to the Table and as we do so I want you think about who you need to show up for – TO WHOM WILL YOU PASS THE TORCH– write it down.

**We know what Jesus did for the church- He SHOWED UP and gave Himself for us. The same Holy Spirit who lives in Him lives in you, if you know Christ as Savior and Lord.**

PRESENT AND FENCE THE TABLE

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