

Vision Sunday 2023

ANNOUNCE AND BABY DEDICATION

Baptism Next week

Dedication - Gunner Jeremiah Hontz

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INTRO

2 1/2 years ago, the Lord saw fit to plant our family in a small midwest town that I had never heard of. The first time I did some research online, I wasn't sure what to expect. Missouri was the farthest thing from my mind. As we answered a call that was clearly laid before us by the Lord.

- We landed in a new culture, a new church dynamic, and NEW WEATHER!
- During the past two years, God has been clearly at work. He's been at work in me as this season has proven to hold battles that I wasn't anticipating... forming, sanctifying, humbling, and forming me. In the mix of establishing a new season from Grace, God has surrounded us and connected us with the most amazing body of believers.
 - Generous to a fault, kind, supportive, loyal, honest, humble, and as of late, we have been seeing an increase in zeal and passion for the kingdom of God and

10:42



and ridiculed, stands firm in the truth and prays for those persecuting them.

- You're the people who show up at Grace House, Pivotal Point, PRC, The Crossing, Noyes Home, Mid City Excellence, Sisters of Solace, and so many more with your finances, time, and talents to bless those in need within our community.
- You're on school boards and ministry boards, give generously and sacrificially
- You're the people building a pediatric hospital wing for Muslim children in Egypt, transitional homes for foster kids in the Congo, runways for unreached people groups in Africa, and supporting countless gospel efforts around the world.
- You're the church that shows up for prayer meetings and prayer walks and fills the chapel to learn how to share the Good News with your neighbors.
- You bring in people to church you meet on the streets to hear the good news of Christ. You love Jesus and you love His Word, you love to worship, and you love people.

And I believe that God has been uniting us, growing us, stretching us, and empowering us, because there are greater things that He still desires to do in and through us for this time and place.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Jer 33:2-3, 6-11 NKJV] 2 "Thus says the LORD who made it, the LORD who formed it to establish it (the LORD is His name): 3 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' ... 6 'Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. 7 'And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. 8 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me. 9 'Then it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to them; they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it.' 10 "Thus says the LORD: 'Again there shall be heard in this place--of which you say, "It is desolate, without man and without beast"--in the cities of Judah, in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, 11 'the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: "Praise the LORD of hosts, For the LORD is good, For His mercy endures forever"--and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD.

Lord, if it's your will, bring these promises to pass for Saint Joseph.

1 Mission

APPLICATION

"Awakening people to the truth, love, and power of God."

Whether it's the lost who are unaware of the truth of the gospel or it's the church that has fallen into a deep sleep, Part of our calling as the church is to call people to awareness. The proverbial watchman on the wall.

[Rom 13:11 NKJV] 11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

[Eph 5:14 NKJV] 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

TRUTH - In a world of lies and deception, we as a church will be committed to upholding and declaring the truth as revealed in the divinely inspired scriptures. We want to do it humbly, lovingly, compassionately, and graciously, but we will not dictate our next moves, our sermons, or our actions as a church based on public opinion, the affirmation of the unbelieving world, or out of fear that someone might be offended. Our allegiance and first priority is to uphold the truth. Jesus said you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

- We will speak God's Word boldly and unapologetically to ourselves, to our community, and to our nation. We will do this most effectively by consistently teaching the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse, and being open to the Holy Spirit, who will speak prophetically His relevant truth that we need for life and godliness.

LOVE - We aren't here to create political or religious ideologues. We want people to understand that there is a real God who desires authentic relationship and has proven that through extending undeserved love towards us.

[1Jo 4:9 NKJV] 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

POWER - Jesus didn't just give us something to believe or only save us from eternal judgment. He also wants us to live for Him and His purposes here and now. He has enabled us to do this by dwelling in our hearts and upon our lives in the person of the Holy Spirit. We want to be those who demonstrate that God has the power to do things that this world can't do in their best efforts. He can break addictions, heal souls and bodies, bring restoration, defeat spiritual adversaries, give courage, and change lives, hearts, and minds.

[1Co 2:4-5 NKJV] 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

2 Vision

PART 1

To shine brightly as "a city on a hill," embodying excellence and courage and exemplifying the transformative power of Christ centered community.

[Mat 5:13-16 NKJV] 13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

We are never to be those who flaunt or boast in our works or in our accomplishments. On the flip side, Jesus did tell us to make Him known through what we do. Selfish ambition is evil, but an ambition to make Christ known to the community around us is admirable. We are to let our light shine. We are to be set above so all can see. We are to flavoring and seasoning our culture in a way that is poignant and measurable.

For decades, Grace has done that in this community. With each season, God has added growth, influence, and effectiveness. And I believe it's still just the beginning. We here today need to think about the legacy of Grace that, if the Lord tarries, we will leave for future generations of believers in this community.

- Now, the things I'm about to share are dreams. I believe, through prayer and fasting, that they are God-given dreams, but they are bigger than us. Some of you will hear me and say, "He's crazy." Some will hear and say, "That's really nice but impossible." Some will only see the obstacles, and others will say, "Let's do this."
- At the end of the day, I'm grateful that I have a God who does the impossible, makes a way, and often does it in times and ways that we least expect. But I'd rather take a big leap of faith and fail than not believe God for His best.

1. SHINING HIS LIGHT THROUGH EXCELLENCE AND BEAUTY

Something that has struck me about Saint Joe is a level of despair and hopelessness among many people. There is generational poverty that plagues many of our neighbors who are in need of practical goods physically, deliverance and love spiritually, healing mentally and emotionally, and discipleship and mentoring.

- I have believed for a good year and a half at least, that a faith-filled, generous, active church in this city will have the transformative influence to change the course of the entire city toward blessing, prosperity, and spiritual life.
- I believe a church where the Spirit of God is moving and the truth of God is being boldly proclaimed could draw people in to be part of a work of God. I think the church has the ability to change the negative population growth, projected losses, and the general sense that the future of Saint Joe is not bright.

But for this to happen, we must change our mentality about what the church needs to be in our city. We need to be more than just a building on the outskirts of town that some people show up to every week. We need a central campus that exemplifies excellence, hope, and healing, from which we are branching out into every area of our community... both drawing people in and sending people out.

CAMPUS: I envision a campus we will build, whether right here or God directs us to another place, that is a picture of beauty, and the center of community in our town.

- A campus that, from the moment you enter it, gives you a sense of belonging and creates an atmosphere of peace and beauty.

- Imagine a parkway of sorts that, in the months of good weather, can provide families a place to come and enjoy a walk or playtime with their kids. A place where small groups can come to enjoy gatherings and picnics.
- A sanctuary that draws a focal point to Jesus and is large enough for us to house outreaches, conferences, productions and multi-church gatherings at once and in one place.
- **On this campus**, we also are bringing people in by showing how Christ can interact with everyday life. There's a coffee shop and a top notch restaurant where you don't only get the best food in town, but you have people that will pray for you, you're surrounded by truth, and you can go somewhere that's a refuge and safe place throughout the week and weekends.
- People can come to exercise in the community gym, learning how to steward and care for their bodies and their souls.
- A Christian, gospel-centered, mental health facility where people from all walks of life can receive professional counseling, accountability, and Christ-centered community to help bring them out of dark and hopeless places.
- Christian entrepreneurs and business owners can have a space to create ideas and receive training on how to use their businesses for the kingdom and change the course of our city and beyond.
- Across the way, there is a multi-acre addiction recovery ranch where people in our community dealing with drugs, alcohol, and other addictions can receive long-term, Bible-centered care and find freedom and a new path through the gospel.

Josh, you're such a dreamer! Get into reality! Here's my reality: This nation was built in its early history by Christians who refused apathy and believed that what their communities needed the most was Jesus in every area. They build schools, hospitals, meeting the needs of the homeless and the addicted. And we have now largely abdicated that role to a secular government that, by the day, is distancing itself further and further from God.

- *Josh, do you know how much money all that will take? Tens of millions.*
- *Josh, do you know how much time that will take? Decades.*
- *Josh, do you know the people that will take? People from here and all over the US.*

PART 2

To establish a vibrant and healthy focal point to encourage and equip Calvary Chapels in the midwest and beyond.

- I believe that part of this vision of having a healthy, thriving church at home is to see other like-minded churches in the Midwest be strengthened, resourced, and encouraged to continue the kingdom's work.
- I believe we will become a launching pad for church plants and a center for conferences to strengthen and equip pastors and ministry leaders.

3 Emphasis

APPLICATION

"Everything that happens inside the church equips the church to get outside."

I believe that the healthier we get, the more impact we have around us. I get so excited about the prospect of getting something moving downtown that shines a light to combat darkness. Small campuses throughout our city that are reaching the south end, Saint Joe Avenue, and other more isolated areas of our community.

On top of that, I want us to be a church that can say yes to transformative ministry ideas. No, we can't say yes to everything and everyone; that would be foolish. But with wisdom and resources, being able to come behind a couple that wants to start a ministry to youth coming out of the foster care system, a young man that wants to work toward reaching the homeless population, a mom or grandmother who wants to disciple younger women, etc.

STAT

While nearly 78% of adults in Missouri identify as some sort of Christian, the stats reveal the startling truth that in the past 7 years, the minority has flipped to the majority on issues such as believing the Bible is the inherent Word of God, believing Jesus is the only way, believing

in hell, believing in moral absolutes. Now, the majority of people who identify as Christian do not believe these truths, and again, those numbers have flipped just in the past 7 years.

One survey of Saint Joe indicated that nearly 75 percent of residents in our city are unchurched.

APPLICATION

I see this as a sad statistic, but I also see it as a rare opportunity. Let's show the people of Saint Joe that we are the real deal who serve a real Savior!

- We already see a new passion in our church for sharing the gospel, reaching our neighbors, and being bold in our witness.

4 Markers

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Pro 24:27 NKJV] 27 Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; And afterward build your house.

There's a lot of groundwork to be done. This is why we truly need your prayer, commitment to the cause of Christ, and willingness to be used as God grants you gifts, resources, and time to serve.

I've created a small outline for our team and myself to assess how to move forward. There are four main qualities I look for in a new venture of faith:

1. **Vision** - Do we have a passionate desire to see something specific come to pass?
2. **Calling** - We can all have big ideas all day long, but is God in it? Does it reflect His heart and desire?

3. **Strategy** - can we develop a plan to move forward? God obviously can do what He wants, change our plans and miraculously intervene, but it's good to have wise counsel and a way to move forward.
4. **Commitment** - Are there people and resources provided to see the vision come to pass?

5 Warnings

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Eze 16:14-16 NKJV] 14 "Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it [was] perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord GOD. 15 "But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who [would have] it. 16 "You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. [Such] things should not happen, nor be.

APPLICATION

One of the tragedies I've observed with churches when they get into vision or building projects or expansions is that they get focused on themselves and their own glory, appearance, or ambitions.

- God warned Israel of this. God has no problem bestowing glory and beauty upon His people for all to see. But when God's people take that glory and beauty for themselves and compromise the truth to maintain prominence or human glory, they are headed for destruction.
- this is why a pure heart and the right motives are essential. Good and godly leadership must be preserved. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, and faithfulness to the Bible must be prioritized.

- this isn't to scare us off from accomplishing great things for the Lord, to warn us to beware of our human nature as God begins to bless.

ILLUSTRATION

One of the things I first noticed my first time downtown after moving here was all the steeples. Saint Joe has some beautiful old church buildings.

- The tragedy, of course, is that many of those buildings are just that: buildings. They are empty shells of a once powerful move of God that are now either housing churches that have fallen into false doctrine, or dying congregations, or event centers.

I have no interest in building something that will one day be a spiritually dead relic, an empty shell. I believe God wants to move in such a way that what is built here and now, until the day He returns, will only increase in spiritual life, vitality, effectiveness, and godliness.

But it will take the whole of us to follow Jesus, being intentional, sacrificial, generous, and committed to Christ.

APPLICATION

In the foyer today, there are tables and information on the various ministries we currently have in our church that need people to serve. There are also some interest forms for ministries that don't yet fully exist.

- I want to encourage you to stop and look, chat with a leader, take some info home, and seriously pray that God would give you a vision and calling for your place in this body. We can't do any of this without you because you are not an audience, you are not observers or consumers, you are a body.

[Eph 4:14-16 NKJV] 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

