Series: Why? (Why We Do What We Do)

June 2, 2019

Message 1

**To Build the Church**

1st Kings 18:41-46

**Intro:** New series - Why? Why do we do what we do?

Every local church is different - just like every family is different - every person is different -

My family - was different from the family I was raised in … and my kids’ family in their own homes is different from the family they were raised in in my home -

Every situation is different - every circumstance is different - people make different decisions - people decide there are different ways to do things -

There is not only one right way to lead a family - there is not only one way to lead a church - there is not only one way to do the various ministries that the Lord has called us to -

But there must be one vision -

The word “division” literally means “two visions” - so more than one vision will bring division.

I believe God calls point people - in churches they are usually called Lead Pastors - and He gives them the vision for the church - then we conduct a variety of ministries in a variety of ways to accomplish that vision -

Our vision here at New Life is to help people -

* **Know God**
* **Find Freedom**
* **Discover Purpose**
* **Make a Difference**

Through -

* **Sunday Services**
* **Small Groups**
* **Next Steps**
* **Dreams Teams**

Further - the Lord spoke to me clearly in October of 2014 -

**“Whether or not you grow numerically, your job … is to prepare this church to be led by the Next Generation.”**

So - we are on a path to figuring that out!

Stats are that 50% of the graduates who are honored in churches all across the nation today will not be a part of a local church for at least the next 10 years of their lives.

Whatever we think we need - we’ve got to try to fix that.

* **Growing Young Conference - October 11-12, 2019**
* **Our Pastors in “Growing Young Cohort” with Fuller Seminary** 
  + **October 2019 - October 2020**
* **Pastor’s time of Renewal and Reflection -** 
  + (announce flip to Pastor Sharon in 2019 & Pastor Randy in 2020)

We told Lilly Endowment and Christian Theological Seminary about this vision and they gave us a tremendous grant for these efforts! Our leadership team believes that was God confirming our vision.

I know God has a purpose for us - I know God has spoken to me - I know God is leading me - and I know God is going to continue to lead us - and our church leadership - and I am convinced that the future is bright - we are seeing more people come into a relationship with Jesus - we are going to see more people come into a relationship with Jesus!

The Crossing …

We are going to reach families - we are going to reach more young people - we are going to Grow Young - and we are going to prepare this church to be led by the Next Generation.

I felt led to take this month to share with you from Scripture -

**Big Idea: Why We Do What We Do?**

**To Build the Church**

Simply put - our highest goal is to build the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ - not our church - not our denomination - but to Build the Lord’s Church - that is bigger than we are.

And in order to do that the highest priority must be to help people come to Know God by bringing them into a relationship with Jesus Christ -

Jack London’s *To Build a Fire* …

Jack London’s character failed to build a fire and died - the same will happen to us if we fail to build the Church.

In 1st Kings 17-18 - famine and drought hit Israel …

Elijah to the Brook Cherith - ravens - then to the widow of Zarephath -

3 years later - God told him to go to Ahab - it was going to rain - but first, God was going to prove Himself to everyone -

This leads to one of the greatest contests in recorded history -

Elijah goes to Ahab - tells him it is going to rain - but tells him to bring all the false prophets up to Mount Carmel …

* 850 total
* The contest itself …
* The fire came …

**T.S.:** In the aftermath of this contest we find three ingredients necessary to build the Church -

**> Prayer**

1st Kings 18:41-42 - Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go get something to eat and drink, for I hear a mighty rainstorm coming!”

So Ahab went to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees.

God had already told him what was going to happen - Elijah knew what was going to happen … it was going to rain.

But Elijah didn’t take that for granted! Elijah prayed until it did happen!

God can tell us what He is going to do - I believe I know what God is going to do -

This church is going to grow - it is going to continue to grow - it is going to grow into the Next Generation - it is going to be here for the Next Generation and be led by the Next Generation -

But we must be people of prayer.

* **We must pray for God’s spoken promise to come to pass.**
* **We must pray - knowing that anything we do must be Him working through us - otherwise, it comes to nothing.**

Bowed low to the ground - face between his knees -

Abject humility - If this is going to get done - God is the One who is going to do it!

Elijah couldn’t make it rain! Only God can do that!

I believe God is giving us a vision that only He can accomplish! There are things we can do - there are things we will do - there is a method that God gives us to accomplish the vision - but none of it can be done in our own strength - none of it can be done with our own talent - we must have the work of God or else what He is giving us to do will not get done!

2nd Chronicles 7:14 - Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.

Ahab didn’t pray - Ahab wasn’t humbled …

How many times do you come to church - hear the voice of God - believe you know what God’s will and purpose is - yet you leave unchanged - and nothing in your life is going to change to bring about what God wants to do?

What part are you playing?

The first thing we have to be committed to is prayer!

If you are talking to anyone else - are you talking to God?

Are you praying for your church?

Are you praying for your pastors?

Are you praying for God’s direction to be given?

Are you praying for God’s will to be done?

Are you humbling yourself in prayer, knowing that we can accomplish nothing without God?

Will you pray with me? I’m calling upon you - the Scriptures are calling upon you - the Holy Spirit is calling upon you to commit yourself to prayer for this purpose -

That we would help people - Know God - Find Freedom - Discover their Purpose - and Make a Difference - and that God would give us wisdom and unity - while we transition this church to being led by the Next Generation.

Elijah prayed expecting his prayer to be answered -

* He prayed and a widow’s son was raised from the dead
* He prayed and the fire came down on the altar
* He prayed and the rain stopped
* He prayed and the rain started again

Are you praying - in expectation that God will answer the prayer?

**> Perseverance**

1st Kings 18:43-44 - Then he said to his servant, “Go and look out toward the sea.”

The servant went and looked, then returned to Elijah and said, “I didn’t see anything.”

Seven times Elijah told him to go and look.

Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, “I saw a little cloud about the size of a man’s hand rising from the sea.”

Elijah’s prayer and expectation led to this -

Imagine yourself in this position …

The servant finally gave in - spoke sarcastically …

THAT’S IT!

**Delaying is not denying!**

Just because we haven’t seen the answer yet doesn’t mean that it is not coming!

Just because we haven’t seen the results yet doesn’t mean they are not coming!

If God has spoken - and if we are praying in expectation - we have to persevere!

Don’t quit!

Never give up! Never give up! Never give up!

I’m not going to quit on the vision God has given me! I pray that if you share this vision, you will never give up on the vision God is giving us!

Elijah could have gotten discouraged and given up because his assistant spoke negatively - didn’t believe - didn’t share the vision -

He didn’t give up! He didn’t let discouragement and lack of faith overtake him!

If we are going to Build the Church and see what God has spoken to us that He wants to accomplish through us - we must PERSEVERE and not give up!

Revelation 3:11 - I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.

**> Power**

1st Kings 18:44-46 - Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, “I saw a little cloud about the size of a man’s hand rising from the sea.”

Then Elijah shouted, “Hurry to Ahab and tell him, ‘Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don’t hurry, the rain will stop you!’”

And soon the sky was black with clouds. A heavy wind brought a terrific rainstorm, and Ahab left quickly for Jezreel. Then the Lord gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab’s chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel.

Small cloud … wasn’t what was needed - it hadn’t rained for three years!

Sometimes what we see is not what we need!

Sometimes the offering isn’t what we think we need to accomplish the vision!

Sometimes the attendance … in services … in small groups … on ministry teams …

A small cloud wasn’t what was needed -

But 5 smooth stones didn’t seem like much either … Giant story …

Jesus had 5000 hungry men and their families in front of him … a hungry crowd starts to get restless …

Jesus: Whaddya got?

5 loaves and 2 fish - “What are they among so many?”

Jesus - bring them to me -

People were fed - 12 baskets left over - 1 for each disciple to take home -

Sometimes, what we have doesn’t look like much - but little is much when God is in it!

**Why do we do what we do?**

* **To Build the Church -**

**What do we need?**   
**- Prayer**

* **Perseverance**
* **Power**

The power of God -

Luke 24:49 - And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 2:1-4 - On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

* The Holy Spirit gives us power to pray more effectively.
* The Holy Spirit gives us the power to persevere.
* The Holy Spirit gives us the power to minister more effectively - serve others - make a difference.

Elijah’s assistant only saw a small cloud - but Elijah heard the sound of a mighty rainstorm!

In Acts, they heard the sound of a mighty windstorm!

Acts 4:33 - The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all.

Acts 6:8 - Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.

1st Corinthians 2:4-5 - And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

1st Thessalonians 1:5 - For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true.

2nd Timothy 1:7 - For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

Ephesians 6:10 - A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

1st Kings 18:46 ESV - And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah…

ILL - “Are you the man from God?” …

Are we going to be the people from God - to build His Church -

* not just talk about it - not just want to see it - but to pray for it - to persevere for it - to receive God’s power for it? - So that people’s lives will be forever changed - into the Next Generation?

**Invitation -**

**Blessing -**