

- What is the mission of Hope Chapel?
 - “We are a church that invites people to come as they are and be changed.”
 - This is the entire reason that we exist as a church. What does it mean?
 - Another way to say it is that it is OK to be not OK. It is not OK to stay not OK.
 - “We are a church that invites people to come as they are and be changed.”
 - One of the key words in this entire statement is the word *change*.
 - Change is actually the one constant in our lives.
 - You are not the same person you were a year ago or five years ago.
 - Sometimes, you are the architect of that change. In fact, the new year is often the time where people take stock at some level of the last year and look ahead to the next.
 - Regardless, whether you make detailed plans/resolutions or not, there is a desire to eat better, lose weight, kick a habit, spend less, save more or be more thankful. Perhaps it is a desire to get a new job, start a new relationship, get married, take that long put off trip, have children or get into college.
 - Since we are at the start of a new year, I thought it appropriate to spend a couple of weeks examining this idea of change.
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- What do we mean when we say that invite people to come as they are and be changed?
 - When we talk of change this way, we are speaking specifically of the changes that leads you and me to more completely follow Jesus.
 - How does this happen? We break it down into three main things. Three areas that Jesus himself laid out as the key components of how we grow, of how we are to change.
 - They are simply this.
 - We are to LOVE JESUS, LOVE EACH OTHER, LOVE THE WORLD.
 - Jesus said the most important command is to Love the Lord with all your hear, mind soul and strength. To be changed is to learn, practice and experience what means to love Jesus more this year than last.
 - Jesus said the other equally important command is to love your neighbor as yourself. To be changed is to be honest and vulnerable enough to love the people around you more deeply, freely and without reservation today than you did yesterday.
 - Just before Jesus left the earth, he told his followers that they have one mission in this life, to go and make disciples of all nations. To be changed is to love and have a passion to see the world around you that Jesus loved and died for come to know him personally.
 - To be changed. To grow. To become more complete disciples of Jesus. These all happen when we are moving forward in these three areas. It really doesn't matter where in the process you are, just that you are moving towards Jesus.
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- For the next three weeks, we are going to briefly look at each of these. How do we grow in LOVING JESUS, LOVING EACH OTHER and LOVING THE WORLD?
 - So today, let's examine what it means when we talk about loving God.
 - The idea of loving Jesus can seem ethereal, kind of nebulous, and is too often tied to how we *feel* about Jesus at any one point in time.
 - To help us in this journey, I want to look at a well-known figure from the bible, found in the Old Testament (the first part).

- The story of David begins long before we ever meet David.
- Israel had no king. They were led by prophets and yet the people were dissatisfied. They wanted to be like the nations around them. They wanted a king.
- Even though this went against God's plan, he granted their request and gave them a king. He picked a young man named Saul who looked kingly in every respect. To his credit, Saul started out pretty well. He was humble and pretty valiant as a warrior.
- But it did not continue. It wasn't too long into his kingship that he made some crucial mistakes and disobeyed the direct commands of the Lord.
- And these mistakes were costly. Samuel, the prophet of Israel, confronted Saul. It did not go well for Saul.

1 Samuel 13:13 "You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. 14 But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command."

- The decision had been made. Saul was through. Oh, maybe not right away, but the Lord had spoken. The line of Saul would end with Saul.
- Instead, the next ruler of Israel would be a man after God's own heart. A man named David.
- All of you have heard of David. You are probably familiar with much of his story. But have you ever considered his life in its entirety?

DAVID'S BIOGRAPHY

- Youngest of eight brothers.
- Got the grunt work
- But Samuel came and anointed him one day.
- Nothing really changed
- Then he took food to his brothers and saw Goliath
- Challenged him and won.
- Became a servant and eventually a soldier in the king's army not to mention the king's personal musician.
- Became best friends with the king's son.
- Married the king's daughter.
- Got so popular and successful that the king tried to kill him, chased him away and gave his wife to another man.
- David spent years living in the wilderness surrounded by miscreants and vagabonds, being chased by Saul and running for his life.
- They had their share of good and bad times. Won some battles with these guys, but once they were away and all their families were kidnapped and all the men wanted to stone David. Another time he had to live in the land of his enemies and he had to pretend to be insane to stay alive.
- Saul eventually was killed by the Philistine enemy and David was made king of the southern part of the kingdom, and eventually by the whole country.
- He was an amazing general and leader. He conquered Jerusalem which was supposed to be impregnable by stopping up a river and having his men go in secret through the water channel under the walls and into the city. He made Jerusalem his capital city.
- He solidified his kingdom. He conquered neighboring kingdoms. He became powerful. He had a core of famous warriors called *David's Mighty Men*. He administered justice and righteousness throughout the land.
- He was so enamored with God that he tried to bring the Ark of the Covenant, which was the symbol of God's presence with the nation, to Jerusalem and in the process, because he did

not follow the laws of God, a man ended up being struck dead. But when he did get it right, it was a massive celebration where David was so excited, he danced with abandon in front of all his people to celebrate God.

- Then there was this time he stayed home instead of going off to war with his army. He saw a woman, lusted after her, committed adultery with her and got her pregnant. Then he had the woman's husband killed through the mechanism of war.
- But all was not lost. His son Solomon was born and the kingdom continued to flourish.
- But he did not pay a lot of attention to some of his sons.
- One of them ended up raping one his daughters.
- Another brother then killed that brother.
- When he was exiled, he led a rebellion against David that almost worked, had David flee the city for his life, and ended up with this son be killed by David's own general.
- After the rebellion, David is reinvigorated as king, but then he makes the mistake of getting proud of his legacy, counting all the people in the nation in direct contravention of God intentions, and it results in a plague killing thousands of people before David repents.
- Before the end of his life, David took hundreds of millions of dollars of his own money, made plans and was going to build a magnificent temple for God in Jerusalem. It was an amazing goal but in the end, a prophet came to David and told him that he could not build it because he was a warrior king who had shed much blood so the job was to be given to his son to do.
- Then David died, having ruled over the nation of Israel for 40 years.
- A thousand years later, Paul, the apostle who wrote a good portion of our New Testament, said this about David.

Acts 13:21 Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. 22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

- Saul. A man chosen from nothing by God. A man given headship over a country. A man who made mistakes and sinned. A man judged by God and removed from kingship.
- David. A man chosen from nothing by God. A man given headship over a country. A man who made mistakes and sinned. A man after God's own heart.
- What was the difference? Why are their legacies so opposite?
- That's because, when it came to loving God, David was never satisfied with what he had, and always wanted more. He never stopped pursuing God. His relationship with God was not intellectual only, or on the surface. It was what mattered most.
- I would say it this way:
- **Loving Jesus means pursuing Jesus.**
- There are probably more, but I notice four things that characterized David's life that I believe made him a person after God's own heart.

I. His identity was rooted in the one who chose him.

- Consider how David became king. He was in the fields watching sheep. There was a dinner for the distinguished prophet of all Israel at their house and David was the only brother not invited!
- Then all of a sudden, a man runs up, out of breath, telling David to "come quickly because the prophet is asking for you." Samuel is holding up dinner for everyone to wait on you.
- When David got there, Samuel knew he was the one. In front of his father and all his seven older brothers, David is anointed the king over Israel.
- God had told Samuel this:

1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

- David never forgot. At times he strayed a little from it, but he always came back to this idea that his identity was not rooted in his role as king, in what people thought, but in what God had said about him.
- When he faced Goliath, listen to his words.

1 Samuel 17:45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

- This is not about me, it's about God.
- When God spoke to David specifically through the prophet about his plans, David didn't get all proud because God spoke to him.

2 Samuel 7:18 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: "Who am I, Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"

- I am who I am because God has loved and chosen me.
- My friends, loving Jesus begins here. Of knowing that Jesus loves you. I mean really loved you. So much he took the torture and punishment meant for you on himself. You are special enough that he picked you. He invited you into his family. He adopted you as his child. He offered mountains upon mountains of grace to you.
- Your success in your job, your abilities, your friends, your stuff – none of that defines you. Rather, it is Jesus choosing you that makes the difference. **Loving Jesus means pursuing Jesus.**

II. He pursued intimacy with God as his highest priority.

- What made David a cut above the rest was that his heart was pointed toward God.
- He chose to worship always.
- He chose to praise God.
- He chose to see his world through the eyes of God.
- He was totally honest with God. He poured everything out that he was feeling, both positive and negative. He simply did not settle for a good worship song now and then. He was not content with feeling close to God sometimes. He was relentless. The Psalms are filled with things he wrote that reflected his feelings and thoughts.

Psalm 18:1 I love you, O Lord, my strength.

Psalm 4:7 You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

Psalm 9:1 I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders.

- Do you see the passion? The desire?
- David simply couldn't help himself. When he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem he wrote this:

1 Chronicles 16:9 Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. 10 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. 11 Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. 12 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, 13 you his servants, the descendants of Israel, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.

- To love Jesus is to pursue intimacy with him. Make a habit of praise. Of thanks. Of worship. Daily. Frequently. Don't give up. When things are stale, lean in. When things are difficult, go after him.
- A love that is not pursued grows cold. **Loving Jesus means pursuing Jesus.**

III. He continually tried to harmonize his life with God's.

- What was important to God was important to David.
- What burdened God burdened David.
- When He said, "Go to the right," he went to the right.
- When He said, "Stop that in your life," he stopped.
- Even in the midst of the ups and downs and sins, David was always looking to God and when he was out of line, he adjusted to God and did not expect God to adjust to him.
- Listen again to Paul's description.
Acts 13:22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'
- David had a deep desire to follow God's will and do "everything" God wanted him to do. He was a man after God's own heart.
- There's a curious relationship between love and action.
- You can tell who I really love because I adjust my life for their benefit. That young man who falls in love with that young woman all of a sudden changes how he spends his money, his time and even changes how he dresses for her. He can't help himself.
- On the flip side, when I adjust my life to someone I begin to grow in love for them.
- If a group of singers sing in harmony, it is wonderful to listen to. Their voices blend and weave together and the sum of their singing is so much better than one by themselves.
- If someone decides to sing the same song but do it their own way, it sounds terrible.
- If we are going to grow in love for Jesus, we must harmonize our life with his. **Loving Jesus means pursuing Jesus.**
- There is one more. I think it is probably one of the hardest but more important.

IV. He regularly confessed in humility.

- David had a soul that could be reached with the truth and he was unafraid to admit his sins, problems and confess them.
- When David committed adultery and murder and was finally confronted by Nathan, it was like an arrow to his soul.
- His own heart was broken because of his spiritual sin.
17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.
- He was not arrogant. He did not try to protect himself. He did not blame others. He did not justify, excuse or ignore his sin.
- Over and over David would repent. He would make things right. He would return to God with complete humility.
- Do you want to grow in your love for Jesus? He is looking for men and women whose hearts have no locked closets. When nothing's been swept under the rugs.
- When they have done wrong, they admit it to God and to others.
- **Loving Jesus means pursuing Jesus.**

- Maybe if your love for Jesus is struggling or cold, then maybe your identity is rooted in what people think of you or your successes and failures more than Jesus.
- Perhaps your passions are being directed everywhere but Jesus himself. Maybe you have stopped pursuing intimacy with him and stopped worshiping, praising and being honest with him.
- Maybe if you are not experiencing that relationship with Jesus and his love is because you are doing what you want to do and living in disobedience and ignoring him or part of him.
- Maybe you are blocked simply because you are too proud to humble yourself, admit you are wrong to God and to the people around you. Maybe you are too scared to open the doors to the closets of your heart or lift up the rug.
- What the world needs is not gifted men and women, but men and women who are broken and inwardly transformed.

2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

- I have not read the last part of Paul's statement regarding David.

Acts 13:21 Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. 22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' 23 "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.

- David was a man after God's own heart and God ended up bringing the Savior of all the humanity through his descendants.
- Practice loving Jesus.
- Root your identity in him
- Make intimacy a priority
- Harmonize with him
- Confess in humility
- Then we will be people who could be described as men and women after God's own heart.