

OAK HILLS MISSION

Part 1 - Oak Hills' Mission...

TEXT: 1 PETER 2:1-10 (ESV)



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Oak Hills Presbyterian Church,
Overland Park, Kansas

Oak Hills' Mission

Oak Hills' mission is to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the whole world, equipping individuals and families to:

- learn to know and enjoy God;
- respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living; and
- lead others to do the same —all by the grace of God and all for His glory.

We Are The Champions

Three years ago, on the Sunday before Vision Sunday, I wanted to focus on God's call for each member of the Body to intentionally invest their time, talents and treasures in serving God's Kingdom. I dubbed it "We are the Champions" Sunday. As I thought of how effective ministry has happened in this church over the years, I saw a pattern: thriving ministries have had champions behind them leading in serving the church and the world through a particular focus. The best seasons of our mission's, adult, children's and worship ministries have come when there has been a champion serving & bringing others along.

The purpose of "We Are The Champions" Sunday—alongside our highest purpose of bringing praise and glory to the name of our true Champion, Jesus Christ—is to remember that all those who have taken the name Christian have a solemn call before God to be champions for the proclamation of His Gospel. Jesus, after His resurrection and just before He was taken up into Heaven, told His disciples, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."¹ (Acts 1:8)

God could have chosen any number of ways to reveal Himself to His creation—burning bushes, angelic visits, writing in the sky. But He ordained the primary way this world would come to know the story of His saving grace would be through the lips of the saved. As beautiful as that is, that's not the end of the story. Later in the New Testament, the apostle Paul describes the Church as a Body—Christ is the head, we are the parts—and not all of us have the same function. Some bear witness by what we see, others by what we hear, others by where we go, others by how we labor with our hands.² (1 Cor 12:20) As the eyes, ears, feet and hands of Jesus, one member's service will look different from another's. But serving together, each according to the gifts God has given, we function as Christ's Body.

How tragic, then, it would be for a Christian to go through life idle and aimless. So for the next 8 weeks we are going to work our way through Oak Hill's Mission Statement, one clause at a time, unpacking our vision for who we believe God has called us to be as a local church and as part of His visible church on earth. The prayer of the Oak Hills' elders is that through this study, we'd all come to live out our role in this body of Christ with greater joy, deeper conviction, and fearless confidence in God's call to proclaim Jesus in any form that might take.

Today we begin with the first three, and perhaps most essential words of that statement: "Oak Hills' mission." Here on "We Are The Champions" Sunday, we begin by rooting this entire series in the glorious, grace-filled truth that we do not exist for nothing, merely killing time until Jesus returns. Christ's church on earth, including Oak Hills', exists to bear witness to the awesome, life-transforming, reconciling salvation Christ has accomplished on the cross. **We have a mission to know and make known the astonishing grace of God with everything we have and are.**

There are many places in God's word to see this call plainly and beautifully stated. The text I've chosen for today from 1 Peter 2 reminds us that our mission as God's people is rooted not in our ability to change the world, but in His changing us. This is the story of Christianity. Mankind was made for relationship with God, but we rejected Him, grasping as much glory for ourselves as we could. We sought to establish ourselves as the center of the universe, worthy of all glory, honor & praise.

Though we failed to do that, we succeeded in driving a wedge between ourselves and our Maker—producing a chasm we could never fill, close or bridge on our own. Now we live in a world where brokenness, betrayal and blindness abound. But the solution to all this mess isn't as simple as getting away from all the wounded, wounding, messy people populating our lives. We're among them. We're part of the problem. And if we're to ever be restored to the relationship with our Creator we were made to rest in, we need to be changed, transformed, *reborn*.

If we aren't changed, what hope could we have that our lives might matter for eternal purposes? But if we *are* changed, transformed, *reborn*, then we are not only free, but *obligated* to hope with a wild, daring, confident hope that God will use our lives because He has said He would. We're obliged to live like the Gospel is true. Today's text speaks to that transforming grace, and it is beautiful. God has given His people everything we need for everything He has called us to do and be, and has called each of us to live as champions of grace in 4 main areas.

1 Peter 2:1-10

¹So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture:

*"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

⁷So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," ⁸and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Four Areas We're All to Champion

To have a mission, a few of things are needed. First, a mission needs a sender. Second, a mission needs people to send. And third, a mission needs a purpose. For a mission to be carried out, those sent need to share a desire to reach the same goal—the goal established by the sender. For Christians, our ultimate mission is essentially the same, to, as Peter puts it, proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. To carry out the mission of the Gospel, every believer is called to live as a Champion in four areas. The first two may look strikingly similar for many believers and the last two will often look pretty different from person to person.

1. CHAMPIONS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: (v. 1)—Right away in our text, we see one of the major obstacles to being a champion for the mission of the Gospel—relational disunity. Notice how relationally focused Peter's exhortation is in verse 1. He urges us to put away, or to "disrobe ourselves" of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. Malice is the desire to harm others. Deceit is the deliberate attempt to mislead. Hypocrisy is pretending to be something you are not, especially in striving to appear holy when your motives are really selfish. Envy is loathing another for what they have that you lack. Slander is the brutality of running another person down with your words. Notice how relational these words are.

All sin is relational—dividing, undermining or ruining one relationship or another, often many at the same time. Adam and Eve's sin had immediate relational consequences—introducing guilt, shame, blame-shifting and deception both between the man and woman, and between the couple and God. For the church to carry out our call to faithfully bear witness to Christ, we must bear witness to what He has done. He has reconciled a sinful humanity to a Holy God. And if He has done that, He can also reconcile sinful people to one another. So we're called to be champions for healthy relationships with one another—putting off what tears down, putting on what builds up.

2. CHAMPIONS FOR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH: (vs. 2-3)—Instead of malice, deceit and the rest, Peter calls us to come to the word of God like an infant to mother's milk—this is the "pure spiritual milk" he was talking about in the closing verses of chapter 1. Peter's heart for the church is that we'd always be growing up, nourished by Christ and His living word. Oak Hills will always need this. Everyone down to the newborn in the nursery needs the nourishment of the word of God. It contains everything the children of God need to grow and mature.

I love the humility in Peter's instruction. To grown adults, many of them well educated, he says that as far as the word of God goes, we shouldn't think we've mastered it, but rather that we're infants needing it to keep us spiritually nourished. We're all called to be champions for our own spiritual growth—to return over and over again to the source of strength we need for all that God has called us to do and be. It is as the old Scottish pastor Robert Murray Mc'Cheyene said, "What my church needs most from me is my own personal holiness."

3. CHAMPIONS FOR THE VIBRANCY OF THE CHURCH: (vs. 4-8)—Next Peter crafts an image of the church, saying believers are like a living building with Christ as the living Cornerstone holding it together. For anyone who has ever said all Christianity is about is a personal relationship with Jesus, Peter disagrees. It is a beautiful truth that a personal relationship with Jesus is offered to every believer, but once you enter into that relationship, your life is no longer your own. Being a Christian is not the business of inviting Christ into your life. It is Christ drawing you into His, counting you among a host of others, all drawn by that same grace, called to proclaim the same Gospel.

If all we were called to be were stones, we'd be left with the image of dead weight. But the Gospel is about life. We're called to be living stones—vibrant, dynamic and useful. Peter says to have this call is to have a great honor—the honor of living as members of a royal priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices to God, never being put to shame. The honor of living as a part of the spiritual house of God is that we live in right relationship with Him, and nothing can destroy that. We can rest in that.

We belong to each other in Christ, each with a call to live as life-giving parts of the Church. This looks different from one person to the next. Some play music, others change diapers, others create spreadsheets, but never for their own glory. We're called to this for the glory of the name of Christ—and to then live as champions for the vibrancy of the Church on earth.

4. CHAMPIONS FOR GRACE TO A WORLD IN NEED: (vs. 9-10)—Peter concludes by speaking to our purpose beyond the walls of the church: "you are a royal priesthood, a holy nation...that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." We need to remember God's initial call on His people in establishing them as a nation tended to by priests. The people of God from the beginning were to be a city on a hill, shining light in darkness. This is what it means to be a holy nation. We are to love those who do not know Christ with everything we have and are. We're called a royal priesthood.

The priests are the ones called to lead the entire nation in love, service and mercy to those so desperately in need of it. In Christ, we are all called to this office—to lead in modeling mercy to the poor, outcast, hopeless and hurting. As a royal priesthood and holy nation, we are called to live as champions of grace for a world in need—all of us. This means every one of us is called to some sort of mercy ministry and evangelism.

I'm excited about what God has for us this year. I'm excited to see new ministries gaining champions and momentum. I pray as we champion healthy relationships, our own personal spiritual growth, vibrancy in the church and grace to a world in need that we'd come to know more and more what it means that these things are excellent—the fruit of being called out of darkness and into God's marvelous light, and that we would love His mission for Oak Hills, seeing it for the honor it is. May God raise each one of us to champion excellent things this year. May we be humbled by how we came to be a royal priesthood, and confident in the One Who calls us to testify and serve.