



20
VISION
20

GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU
SERMON SERIES

TRUE YOU



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Session #1: Discover Your Divine Design

Text: Jeremiah 1:1-10

Big Thought: *You are more unique than you think.*

God has a dream for your life. Unfortunately, most people never find clarity about God's dream for them and they settle for a life that is less than what God designed. In this message, we'll ask people to take the journey in this series of knowing and naming their special calling from God.

Session #2: Uncover the True You

Text: Jeremiah 4:1-4

Big Thought: *Breakdown is the pathway to breakthrough.*

There is a generic version of you that tempts you to settle for a generic life. But God has called you to more than that ... He has called you to something unique and powerful. It won't be easy—and it will probably require things in your life to be broken and peeled back—but the end result is worth the journey.

Session #3: Recover Your Kingdom Calling

Text: Jeremiah 20:7-12

Big Thought: *Embrace the place of God's calling grace.*

How would you articulate the one thing God has called you to do? There are many things you can do ... but what is the one thing you must do? By understanding both your calling and your convictions, you can begin to identify the one thing that is at the center of your unique mission from God.

Session #4: Live Out God's Dream

Text: Jeremiah 29: 1-14

Big Thought: *Dream to live if you want to live the dream.*

In this message, we'll talk about the power of two underused spiritual practices: dreaming and planning. God invites us to dream of what tomorrow could be like if we believe Him and He challenges us to plan based on where we are today. The connection between the reality we face today and the dream God gives us for tomorrow is important for us to understand as we discover clarity about our lives.



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Session #5: Invest for God's Best

Text: Jeremiah 32:6-15

Big Thought: *Stop asking God to change your environment and start allowing God to change your investment.*

We could have the greatest dream and the greatest plan in the entire world, but if we don't choose to invest in them, very few things will change in our lives. The future belongs to those who invest in it. That is why through this message, we want to challenge you to invest in your future.

Session #6: Leave a Lasting Legacy

Text: Jeremiah 33:14-26

Big Thought: *Get ahead on what you want to leave behind.*

In this series we have laid out a pathway on how to live our lives well every day. It starts by discovering our divine design. It continues by rejecting false versions of ourselves and returning to who God says that we are. It is a life driven by our calling and convictions. It is a life propelled forward by dreaming and planning with God, and investing accordingly. When we live out all these things daily, we create a lasting legacy. This is the clear view to the true you that we have been journeying toward. It's how we live with 20/20 Vision for Life.

SESSION #1

DISCOVER YOUR DIVINE DESIGN





GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Session #1: Discover Your Divine Design

— Jeremiah 1:1-10 Suggested Reading: *Younique*, ch. 2

Hook: Glasses (*Bring in several pairs of glasses including 3D glasses*)

Helen Keller, a great woman of faith who, though both blind and deaf, left a lasting legacy in our world, was once asked if there was anything worse than being blind. Her response? “Yes, being able to see but not having any vision.”

It’s a remarkable statement if you think about it. Here was a woman who couldn’t see but had so much vision for her life. It’s a statement that pierces through the ability that so many of us often take for granted every day and points us to a greater reality that too few of us ever really take hold of. We know how to see, but we lack vision.

When it comes to seeing and vision, clarity is essential. Which is why so many of us wear glasses. Even if we don’t have any problems with our eyesight, most of us wear glasses of some kind. Some of us wear prescription glasses because we are near-sighted or far-sighted. Lots of us wear sunglasses, because on a bright summer day the glare of the sun keeps us from seeing clearly without them. Some of us wear fake glasses, because we believe we look more scholarly or just plain better with glasses on. But another pair of glasses we sometimes wear is 3D glasses.

Whether we are headed to watch the newest release of Star Wars, Avengers or Toy Story, there is just something that comes to life when we watch these movies in 3D. The action of the movie jumps off the screen and into life. And sure, the glasses look and feel a little goofy at first, but if you have ever tried to watch a 3D movie without them you know just how important the glasses are. Without the glasses, the film is more of a blur than a movie. But with the glasses on, everything comes into focus. The movie starts happening not just on the screen but all around you. The movie becomes an experience.



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Transition: *I bring this up today because I think that what happens in the theater also happens in our lives. Too many of us are watching a 3D version of our life in two dimensions. God is writing a story in our world and wants to write a story of our lives that leaps off the pages of Bible and into the places we live, work, and play. But for many of us, all we see is a blur.*

Let me explain. What do you see when you look at your life? For some of us, all we can see are the obstacles, challenges, and opportunities that are standing right in front of us. We're living kind of near-sighted. We're able to see clearly what we're facing right now but incapable of seeing beyond it. For others, we live kind of far-sighted. We have a clear vision for the future, but all the obstacles we face each day get in the way of us arriving at a preferred future.

But what if we all could live with a vision for tomorrow that not only inspires us to our future but helps us know what do right now? What if we all could live with 20/20 Vision for Life? Aware of who God has made us to be. Completely committed to what God has called us to do. Compelled by a provocative picture for the future. And deeply invested in that future that makes the future more than a wish. What if your future was a God-dream that not only came into greater focus and became more real each day but also left a legacy beyond the years of your life.

This is 20/20 Vision for Life.

This is the year to hear the call to live your life for all that God designed it to be. It's a call to stop settling for a lesser version of you than God had in mind when He crafted you in His imagination before you were born. It's a call to get a clear view of who you are and what you were made for. It's a call to step into that version of you with the kind of confidence that not only changes you but the entire world around you. See, God has been having a dream about your life from the beginning of time. So why settle for anything less? This is 20/20 Vision for Life, and it's time for you to get a clear view of the true you.



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Text: Jeremiah 1:1-10

Background:

- Jeremiah prophesied right before and during the darkest moment in Israel's history—the Exile.
- A century earlier, the former northern kingdom (Israel) had been destroyed and its people scattered among the nations of the Assyrian Empire.
- Now the southern kingdom (Judah) was heading for similar judgment. Even though Judah had seen the spiritual decline of the northern kingdom and the destruction and judgment that was the result, the southern kingdom continued to turn its back on God.
- Jeremiah's task was to warn the unrepentant people of Judah that the day of reckoning was almost upon them.
- Jeremiah's prophetic ministry began in the 13th year of Josiah. Josiah was a great king who led the last spiritual renewal in Israel's history. However, Josiah's reforms failed to get below the surface and change the hearts of the people.
- Jeremiah was from a priestly family in Anathoth but was called to be a prophet.
- Jeremiah prophesied for five decades from 627 BC until 582 BC.
- Jeremiah was known as "the Weeping Prophet," because although he pleaded with Judah to return to God, the nation never did.

The good news for all of us is that we aren't the first people in history to struggle with vision. In fact, if you were to go through the Bible, most of the great leaders in Biblical history had this struggle as well.

Moses: struggled as a convicted killer on the backside of a desert to see who God had made him to be.

Gideon: struggled by threshing wheat in a wine press because he couldn't imagine the mighty man of valor that God created him to be.

Samuel: struggled to perceive that Jesse's oldest son wouldn't be the next king of Israel but that the youngest shepherd boy who no one even invited to the anointing would be.

Paul: had to be literally knocked to the ground and blinded for a few days before he could start seeing correctly.



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Today we're going to see that what Moses, Gideon, Samuel, and Paul all struggled with was the same struggle Jeremiah had. In fact, the whole book of Jeremiah is kind of an inside look at one prophet's (and country's) struggle to see what God sees. That's why the prophet Jeremiah and the Book of Jeremiah is a perfect place for us to gain 20/20 Vision for Life.

Here in Jeremiah 1, we jump into the beginning of the book and listen in to Jeremiah's struggle to see both who he is and what God wants to do with his life. It's a fantastic story and one that I think all of us can relate to in one way or another. It helps us start our own journey toward 20/20 Vision for Life by learning one big truth:

Big Thought:
You are more unique than you think.

When Jeremiah's story opens, the southern kingdom of Israelites, which was called Judah, finds itself in a pretty perilous predicament. Just a century earlier, the northern kingdom of Israel has been conquered by the violent Assyrian Empire. Now the southern kingdom is on the verge of facing devastation with an even stronger Babylonian Empire on the horizon. And even though Judah has been led by one of the greatest and godliest kings in all of its history, King Josiah's reforms haven't really gotten below the surface of the people's lives.

For most people in Jeremiah's day, we could say life was a blur. The threat of attack was real. The deliverance of God seemed distant—a story of the past but nowhere connected to the reality of their day. They were just going through life, living to satisfy themselves, forsaking God and His ways and using everything they had been given by God to serve themselves. It is right at this point that God calls one man named Jeremiah to be his mouthpiece to the nation. As God does this, he makes a few remarkable statements to Jeremiah that I hope will encourage you today. Let's listen in.



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Point #1—You are a one-of-a-kind, divine design (vv. 4-8)

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul the Apostle reminds of this when he says, “We are God’s masterpiece, created to do good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do.” The Greek word we translate as “masterpiece” is the word *poiema*. It’s where we get our word poem from. We are God’s poem. We are His highest work of art. And as a work of art we are designed to do the good works that God has prepared for each of us to do.

In other words, God has been dreaming about your life from the beginning of time. Before you came into existence, you were in God’s imagination. He has made you exactly who you are to be in order to do everything he has called and is calling you to do. There is no one on the planet like you. He formed you in the womb. He knows you. And he has destined you for great things.

The truth, however, is that even though this idea is repeated through the Bible, most of us have trouble believing it, just as Jeremiah did. Like Jeremiah, we convince ourselves that there is nothing truly special about who we are. We are too young or too old. Our abilities aren’t that significant. Our passions aren’t that extraordinary. And even if we were convinced of who God has made us to be, our environment would never allow us it. We are caught in the haze of the ordinary, rarely glimpsing the extraordinary creation that God made us to be. So we settle for an ordinary life with modest expectations of what God could ever do through us.

Illustration: Shrinking Shirts

Have you ever noticed that every shirt you buy doesn’t fit you quite right? It looks great in the store, but once you get it home everything changes. This is the problem with buying our clothes off the rack. The general sizes of small, medium, large, and so on aren’t really tailored to our different body types. So we buy the medium that looks good in the store but it shrinks into a small the first time it is washed. Or we buy the large or extra-large expecting it to shrink but it doesn’t. In the end our closets are full of shirts that don’t fit us—too small or too large, or the right fit for our chest but the wrong fit for our armpits, or the right fit for our neck but the wrong fit for our wrists. We make it work—we tuck it in or stretch it out—but we don’t really ever feel comfortable in it.

But if you’ve ever come across a shirt that fits you exactly right, or if you’ve ever had a shirt tailored to you, you know that it’s a game-changer. Once you’ve purchased this kind of shirt, you don’t ever want to wear anything that’s not really your size ever again. In fact, the difference between looking good and not looking good really has little to do with your body type, because the right size clothes make all the difference.



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Transition: *What is true about clothes is also true about our lives. I wonder how many of us have shrunk back into a life that looks nothing like the life that God designed us to live? Or I wonder how many of us have been burned by the lure of a pipe-dream spawned on by the marketers, advertisers, or credit card companies to aspire us toward a version of the “American Dream” that is too big for anyone to live out in a healthy way? Or I wonder how many of us are really caught in between the two, living our life like we wear our clothes, just making do with the closet full of clothes that don’t really fit us very well? Jeremiah 1 teaches that this is not how we have to live our lives. God has designed us, he has formed us, he has placed his hands on us long before we became who we are today. Not only that, but if we let him, he will tailor our lives to be just the right size to accomplish everything that he has been imagining for us from the beginning of time. You are more unique than you think.*

Point #2—Your divine design points to your divine destiny (vv. 8-10)

Jeremiah’s divine design points toward his divine destiny. We find here in verses 8 through 10 what that destiny is. God tells Jeremiah that he is to be a planter and a builder—not a literal planter like a farmer or a builder like an architect but a prophet who plants and builds things with his words. But this planting and building will not happen on neutral ground. In fact, to plant he will need to plow up some things that have grown where they shouldn’t have. In order to build, there will be some things that need to be torn down and removed. It won’t always be easy work, but it will be good work. Not everyone will appreciate the work he is doing (and for most of Jeremiah’s life, most people didn’t). But what is promised is that God will help him do it.

These are the words that God gives to everyone throughout Scripture that He has designed and given a destiny: “I will be with you.” These are the words that God gave to Moses when Moses was called to go to Pharaoh and tell him to “let my people go” even though Moses was a wanted criminal in Egypt and afraid to return. These are the words that God gave Joshua when Joshua was convinced that Moses’ shoes were too big for him to fill. These are the words that God gave to Gideon when Gideon was sure that God had chosen the wrong person to deliver Israel from the Midianites. These are the words that God gave Solomon when he was convinced he couldn’t live up to his father David’s legacy. They are the words that Jesus passed onto his disciples in his Great Commission and the words that Paul gave to Timothy as he passed the torch from the early church to the next generation. It’s what God continues to say to all of us who have been designed by his great imagination: “I will be with you. I designed you for greatness and what I design I also destine. If you let me continue to form and make you, I will help you step into your divine design.”

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What was true for Jeremiah is also true for us. You are more unique than you think. The God of the universe has designed you. The same way you have a unique fingerprint, your life has a unique design. And this divine design comes tailored with a divine destiny. The God who formed you is also committed to forge the future with you. But to forge that future you have to choose to step into it with him.

Illustration: Totality

Let me ask you something: do you remember the Great American Eclipse? It happened on August 21, 2017. It was a total solar eclipse visible within a band that spanned the entire contiguous United States. It was billed as a phenomenal occurrence of nature, and it dominated the headlines of our news sites and televisions. In the run-up to the eclipse, we started hearing the word “totality” as broadcasters demonstrated with graphics and charts where in the country the best experience would be. For those of us, who weren’t in the smaller band of 100% totality, percentages like 77% or 87% or 97% seemed pretty good. How big of difference could there really be to gain just 3% more shadow? Most of us couldn’t imagine fighting the traffic to make the journey to the totality zone.

But in actuality, the difference between 97% and totality was everything. For those who weren’t in totality the event seemed overplayed—exaggerated by the media wanting to make story and eclipse glasses-makers wanting to make a buck. To us, it got a little dark and grey for a while and the street lights came on, but soon everything went back to normal. It was pretty cool, but not something we would tell our grandchildren about.

But people who dared to venture into the zone of total eclipse had a totally different experience. People were astounded by the wonder of the moment they found themselves in. Some of them cried. Others felt like they were coming alive. And the pictures and videos they captured record a day they will never, ever forget. When they came back and told the rest of us about the eclipse as they experienced it, it was as if we saw two completely different things.

Transition: *What is true about the Great American Eclipse is also true about the journey of 20/20 Vision for Life. You can choose to live on the edges of your divine design if you want. If you do, this will merely be a decent series of messages where you’ll hear a few engaging truths and walk away unchanged and unaffected. Jeremiah could have done that with his moment with God here in Jeremiah chapter 1. But instead, Jeremiah chose to move into totality with God, to step under the full shadow of his divine design and divine destiny. His book lives on to tell the story of a what a life that stepped into totality with God could look like.*



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It wasn't an easy journey to totality for Jeremiah, and it won't be an easy journey for you either. But if you choose to put your glasses on, to fight through the traffic up ahead, and give yourself fully to the journey on the other side of this sermon, you too might just have an experience that changes the way you see everything.

Conclusion: A Clear View into the True You

I'm inviting you to dare to move out of your near-sighted or far-sightedness. I'm asking you to consider that you are more unique than you think. I'm calling you step toward your divine design and divine destiny.

God has been dreaming about your life from the beginning of time. I believe you can actually learn to know it and name it. But to do so, you'll have to do more than just hear a few sermons and go on your way. You'll have to step into a process. That's why along with this sermon series we are tailoring a few opportunities to help you move toward totality. We are committing to these processes as a church because we are committed to God's design and destiny for your life.

You can live on the outside of the experience if you want to, but I'm inviting you into something more, just as God called Jeremiah to something more. In these six weeks, I'm inviting you to step toward a clear view of the true you.

SESSION #2

UNCOVER THE TRUE YOU





GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Session #2: **Uncover the True You**

—Jeremiah 4:1-4 Suggested Reading: *Younique*, chs. 1 & 3

Hook: The Imitation and the Real Thing

“The most common form of despair is not being who you are.”
—Soren Kierkegaard

“Who you are is God’s gift to you. Who you become is your gift to God.”
—Hans Urs von Balthasar

As humans we have a hidden talent: we are quite good at not being ourselves. Instead we settle for a cheap imitation or generic version of ourselves while we spend our lives constantly wondering if there is anything more to the life we find ourselves living.

However, most of us don’t make this choice intentionally. Honestly, we kind of stumble into it. Our world is filled with generic things, so living a generic life just comes naturally to us. This is never more apparent than when taking a trip down the cereal aisle of your local grocery store. On this aisle there are both the traditional cereals and the generic version of those cereals. And every kid on the planet has had the experience of their mom and dad trying to save a buck or two by buying the generic and trying to get them to believe that it is just as good as the real thing.

So, on the cereal aisle there is Rice Krispies and Crispy Rice. There is Froot Loops and Fruit Spins. There is Corn Pops and Golden Nuggets of Corn. There is Lucky Charms and Fortunate Marshmallows. There is Total and Almost. Okay—not all of those are actual cereals, but you get the idea.

The promise of the imitation is that you can have all the taste for half the cost. And at first the imitation does taste like the real thing. It’s usually not until you taste the aftertaste that you realize you’ve bought into the imitation. Even more, if you eat the imitation long enough you will convince yourself that it’s just as good as the real thing—that is, until you taste the real thing again and realize the real thing is actually quite different.



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Transition: *What is true in the cereal aisle is also true in life. Too often we settle for the promise of the generic—that we can have all the taste for half the cost. And so we go on living a generic life with a generic sense of who we are and what God has made us for, convincing ourselves the whole time that this is as good as it gets. But every once in a while we meet someone who challenges the status quo that we have settled for and calls us to something different. They break us out of our normal patterns of life and help us imagine something better. That is what this sermon series, 20/20 Vision for Life, is all about. Today I'm calling you to your true self. It will cost you more than a generic life, but it won't leave you with a bad aftertaste. This is exactly the kind of thing that Jeremiah calls the people of God to in Jeremiah 4.*

Text: Jeremiah 1:1-10

Big Thought:
Breakdown is the pathway
to breakthrough

Review: *Last week we began our series 20/20 Vision for Life. We said that in this series we would be moving through the book of Jeremiah and that as we read the book of Jeremiah that it would help us gain clarity for our own lives. Last week we looked at Jeremiah's call in Jeremiah 1. The big truth was that you are more unique than you think. We discovered together how God has been dreaming about our lives from the beginning of time. We learned that God formed us in the womb and that he desires to forge his future for us—that we have both a divine design and a divine destiny. Now today we want go further, because just because you have a divine design and a divine destiny doesn't mean that you will step into it.*

This week we drop into Jeremiah 4 and hear Jeremiah's first call to the people of Israel to return to their true selves. In this passage, the people of God have settled for an imitation or generic version of themselves. In fact, it's even worse than that: they've become the worst version of themselves.



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Like we said last week, the story of the Bible is not the story of a God who remains distant from his creation. Instead, the picture we see both in Jeremiah 1 and throughout the Bible is of a God who is intimately involved in our world. It's the story of a God who is intensely personal, who continues to bend over backward to call out a people for himself to become who he dreamed they would be. And yet, throughout the Bible we see his people constantly rejecting his love and chasing after lesser things. Very little of the Bible is a story of the faithfulness of God's people to him. It's not human beings' default posture by nature. Most of the Bible is a story of God's people settling for less than God's best—turning to everything but God and designing a life without him in it.

God's desire for personal interaction has huge implications for both us and God. On our end, it means that we can genuinely experience hope, peace, and joy in life because of God's presence in our lives. On God's end, it means that he is emotionally involved with his creation and even risks being rejected by it.

As it turns out, God does not hide his feelings of rejection from his people. The words of Jeremiah chapters 2 and 3 give us a glimpse into the raw emotion of God as he watches his people reject his love and give themselves to everything but him. It reads like the diary of a wounded lover scorned. It reads like the ramblings of a father or mother who can't figure out why their kids are rebelling against them. Everyone who has been cheated on or rebelled against knows the pain and anguish of that experience. Jeremiah 2-3 are an emotional outburst filled with such strong language that it grates against our ears whenever it is read in gatherings today. Like all wounded lovers, we see God caught between anguish and anger, longing and loathing, hope and hate. Like a lover who has been cheated on time and time again, he fantasizes about his people's return in one moment and then hopes they never come back in the next. And yet, God's love for his people keeps him coming back time and time again to call them back to being the people he designed them to be.

Now one chapter later, in Jeremiah 4, we hear God's impassioned desire for the relationship between him and his people to be renewed. However, for the relationship to be renewed and for Israel to become the people they were designed to be cannot happen without a breakdown of sorts. It's the breakdown that makes the breakthrough possible.

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Point #1: Break Up with Your Mess-Ups)

In verse 1 of Jeremiah 4, we hear God's heart for his people to return to Him. He wants not just their performance but their pursuit, not just their behavior but their beings, not just their customs but their core. More than their rituals, God wants a true relationship. He wants to be his people's passion, their ambition, the one thing they seek after, sacrifice for and love. This is what God has always wanted and what he wants from us today.

It's surprising if you think about it. It would be easy to expect God just to be done with his people, to let them go their own way and do their own thing. How many times must he let his heart be injured? In reality, Israel spent very few years madly in love with God. As I said earlier, it wasn't their default setting, and it isn't ours either. Yet over and over again, God pursues us so that our generic and fabricated lives can become what he always imagined we would become.

But if God's people are going to return to the best version of themselves and a right relationship with God, two things need to happen. First, God says, they need to break up the fallow ground. They need to become breakable again. The places that have become calloused and hardened need to be plowed up and turned over. Second, they will need to be peeled back (circumcised). They will need to be exposed at their deepest levels with all their questions, doubt, struggles, and short-comings. In short, they will need to break-up with their messed-up versions of themselves and their messed-up lives.

What was true for God's people in Jeremiah 4 is also true for us. If we are to become who God has designed us to be, we too have to plow up the fallow ground of our lives. We need to be peeled back and allow our lives to become exposed for the generic lives they are. We need to break up with the messed-up beliefs about God and about ourselves that we have become accustomed to. We need to break up with the generic version of our life that for far too long we have settled for.

Illustration: Five Versions of You

Presenter's Note: *You may want to bring in different hats, shirts, or jackets to represent the different generic versions of ourselves that we grow accustomed to being. Have fun with this illustration and use your creativity to help it stick.*

It's easy to say that we want to be the version of ourselves that God has designed us to be. But the truth is that there are five other versions of ourselves that we are more likely to live out. Each of these other versions is less than the life God designed and destined us to live.

In fact, this is really what sin is all about. All of our struggle with sin comes down to our tendency to settle for lesser versions of God, ourselves, and life itself—to walk an easier path



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to a lesser goal. Sure, the lie of the imitation tells us we can have all the taste for half the cost, but in the end we live with the aftertaste.

Here are the five versions of ourselves that too often rob us of God's best.

1. *The Expectations of Others—the Me Others Want Me to Be*

Much of our lives is lived to suit the expectations of other people. Instead of living according to God's expectations of our lives, we often make the voices of others the louder voices in our lives. When we do, we settle for less than God's best. [Give a personal example of how this has affected your life.]

2. *The Imitation of Success—the Me I Think I Want to Be*

The American Dream says that we can become whatever and whoever we want. But most of us are so overwhelmed by that huge freedom that we settle for copying somebody else—some model of success that everyone praises. Unfortunately, when we try to imitate whomever the world calls a success, we ignore the person God has designed us to be. [Personal example.]

3. *The Infatuation of Money—the Me They Pay Me to Be*

If you don't become who you are created to be, it is easy to be whatever people pay you to be. It isn't hard for the lure of the almighty dollar to be the primary influence on who we're supposed to be and what we're supposed to do so that it leads us to become a generic version of ourselves. As Jesus says, we cannot serve both God and money. [Personal example.]

4. *The Preoccupation of Life—the Me Time Makes of Me*

Being busy makes us into something we're not. Caught in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, the hurry takes its toll on us. We become simply a product of our past choices and present demands instead of the person God made us to be. [Personal example.]

5. *The Projection of Self—the Me I Want to Be*

Many people—maybe all of us—are unsure that the person we really are is worth much. We're not sure that our true selves are good enough for people's approval. So we spend our lives cultivating an image of ourselves that we hope will gain other people's admiration and affection only to lose ourselves in the process. [Personal example.]



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Transition: *These five versions of me are in constant competition with the Me That God Made Me to Be. And if we are not careful, one or all of these versions of ourselves are who we will become. But the real reason that we chase lesser versions of ourselves is that we have bought into a lesser version of God and a lesser version of life. That's actually where most of the sin in our lives comes from—if you trace your sin struggle back far enough, it usually leads to one of these versions of yourself. But if you could see the person who God made you to be, all the lesser versions of yourself would pale in comparison.*

Today I'm calling you to break up with the messed-up versions of God and of you that you have settled for. I'm calling you to peel back the layers of doubt, disappointment, struggle, and sin that has led you become this version of you. As you do, you might just uncover the true you.

Point #2—Return to the Maker of the True You

Jeremiah 4:1-4 points us back to God himself. He is the truest voice, and by his voice all things are created and made beautiful. It is only by seeing the truest version of God that we can see the truest version of ourselves. Listen again to God's words from Jeremiah 4:1: "Return to me." No true version of ourselves can be found outside of him.

Don't you think it's time to return to God? Aren't you tired of allowing lesser voices to dictate who you are? Haven't you seen how futile it is to try to forge a version of yourself that is anything less than God created you to be? Isn't it time to ask God who he says you are? And aren't you ready to break up with the version of you and life that keeps settling for less than God's best?

I want to repeat something I said earlier: "Breakdown is the pathway to breakthrough." It's when we break down and peel back the generic versions of ourselves that we truly uncover our true identities, the best version of who we were created to be. To be sure, breakdown may hurt a little. The process may be arduous. The peeling back may be painful. But the breakthrough on the other side of breakdown will be worth it.

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Illustration: Orange Object Lesson

Presenter's Note: *Bring in several oranges, a knife, a cutting board and a bowl for this object lesson.*

An orange in and of itself is a pretty useless thing. You can throw it like a ball. You can set it on a table. You can juggle a couple of oranges if you have the skill. But in and of itself, there is not much you can do with an orange—that is until you cut it and peel it back. Once the orange is cut and peeled back, the core fruit inside the peel is revealed. And the fruit inside is so much better than the covering on the outside. The cutting and the peeling back of the orange leave it vulnerable for sure. But once the fruit is exposed, the true version of the orange is revealed.

Transition: *This is all that God was hoping for from Israel in this passage. They have covered themselves over with sin and struggle. But God knows who they are, who they have been designed to be and what they have been destined to become. The cutting and the peeling back may feel painful. But what emerges from the process is exquisite. Breakdown is the pathway to breakthrough.*

Conclusion: Fighting Fire with Fire

As this passage in Jeremiah says, there is another option. The end of verse 4 spells it out. The poet T. S. Eliot said that we only have two choices; he wrote, "We only live, only suspire consumed by either fire or fire." He meant that all throughout Scripture God is described as a consuming fire. And if we will not be consumed by his grace and love and mercy, the fire of the Holy Spirit, then we will be consumed by the fire of his wrath and anger. The difficult reality is that in the end God is too good to let a generic version of himself, of ourselves, and of life go on forever. Too much goodness is at stake for that to happen. In the end all things will be revealed. The generic will be exposed and only what is real will remain.

Firefighters call it fighting fire with fire. It happens when a fire is so big that the traditional method of putting water on the fire is no longer an option. In these cases, only one option is available. Instead of trying to put the fire out with water, the fire fighters go ahead of where the fire is moving and set a controlled burn. With the controlled burn all the fuel of the raging fire moving in that direction is consumed before the fire gets there. In the end, the fire is put out because there is nothing left to burn.

In the same way that firefighters set a controlled burn, so God wants to set a controlled burn in our hearts and lives. He wants to consume us with his mercy, love, and grace, so that when his wrath and anger arrive there is nothing left to burn. To be sure, the generic is passing away. Only what is real will remain. So let's allow the mercy and love of God to break us up and peel us back. Let's move toward the breakthrough on the other side of breakdown. Let's return to God. Let's return to the true version of ourselves. I dare you to seek a clear view of the true you— 20/20 Vision for Life.

SESSION #3

RECOVER YOUR KINGDOM CALLING





GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Session #3: Recover Your Kingdom Calling

— Jeremiah 20:7-12 Suggested Reading: *Younique*, chs. 8, 10, 11

Hook: Can Do vs. Must Do

Presenter's Note: Use a slide deck or white board to illustrate the drawing from Professor Howard Hendricks below.

Parker Palmer, in his book *Let Your Life Speak*, makes this statement as he recounts evaluating his life around mid-life: "I realized that I was doing an incredibly noble job of living someone else's life." Those words are haunting. For far too many of us, those words name exactly what we sense to be true deep inside. Who we have become and who God designed us to be are two very different people. With all the best intentions in the world, we have nobly become someone we are not.

Professor Howard Hendricks (who has done more for Christian education than just about any other person over the past 100 years) knew just how easy it was to become someone you're not. So to help his students think about their lives, he would draw a funnel on the chalkboard. At the top of the funnel he would draw several Xs and tell his students, "These are all the things you *can* do." Then he would draw one large X at the bottom of the funnel and say, "This X is the one thing you *must* do."

After Professor Hendricks let the diagram sink in, he delivered his lesson. "The more successes you have in your life, the more can-dos fill up the top of your funnel. But *most opportunities are distractions in disguise*. If you're not careful, you will spend your entire life doing all the things you can do and never find the one thing you must do. So what's the one thing you must do?"



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Transition: *This is the question I want to address today. What burns within you that you can't deny? What lives in you that you must let out? Did you once know, but it was squelched by the disappointments and demands of life? Or maybe you were afraid of naming it out loud, so you quietly pushed it aside for respectable reasons? Or maybe you never knew it but you've always wanted to?*

The good news is that we are not the first to struggle with confusion over our calling. Today I want to invite you back into the journey with the prophet Jeremiah that we've been on for the last couple weeks, because he struggled with his call and identity too. As we look at his struggle, we'll find insights to recover our own calling.

Text: Jeremiah 20:7-12

Big Thought:
Embrace the place of God's calling grace.

Review: *We've called our exploration of Jeremiah 20/20 Vision for Life. We've been looking at one man's and one nation's struggles with identity and calling. Along the way, I have already made a couple of big statements about the one-of-a-kind divine design that each of us has from God. Two weeks ago, we saw that you are more unique than you think, because God has created all of us with a unique design and destiny. Last week, we saw that breakdown is the pathway to breakthrough. We took a look at false images and understandings of ourselves, and we saw how we can turn to God to learn who we truly are. Today we're going to build on those two big ideas with this one: embrace the place of God's calling grace.*

Here in Jeremiah 20, we catch the prophet Jeremiah in a crisis of calling and conviction. He has done his best to live out his one-of-a-kind divine design and destiny only to be met with resistance, rejection, and ridicule from his community. He has literally been placed in stocks at the city gate because the message that he has been preaching has threatened the status quo. He's calling for change and reform in the midst of idolatry and hypocrisy. He's calling for Israel to turn back to God. And the rejection and resistance has taken its toll on him.



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Here in chapter 20, Jeremiah is ready to give up on God and even on life. He's angry at God for what his life has become. His life doesn't look very unique in design or destiny. He's in a full-fledged identity crisis. But it's in this crisis that Jeremiah recovers a few truths about his identity, and because he learns to embrace them instead of ignore them, they make all the difference in who he becomes. Let's listen in to his struggle.

Point #1—Calling is what you can't help but do (vv. 7-10)

Verses 7-10 invite us into Jeremiah's struggle. His honest, real, and raw emotions are not hidden in his conversation with God. He feels deceived, disconnected, and distraught. He's ready to give up and go on with his life without God. He's ready to abandon his call.

But in verse 9, Jeremiah gives words to what those of us who live with a strong sense of calling know deep down to be true. There are times when we would quite honestly like to not embrace the calling that God has placed on our lives. We just can't do it anymore. Our only problem is that we cannot not do it either. Like a fire in our bones, it has to come out of us, because on some days, the only thing worse than living our calling is not living it. An experience like this speaks a clear word about who we are and what we are called to do.

It's a challenging truth, but just because you are called to do something, it doesn't mean that doing will be easy. Calling is not an exemption from pain, suffering, despair, or depression. Living out of your call does not mean that every day is a good day. But because many people ignore this truth, they don't embrace the place of God's calling grace.

When times get tough or things go wrong, most people assume that there is something wrong with their calling. So they go searching for clearer paths to a lesser life. But a true sense of calling will never let us do this. Because even though a lesser life may be easier, in the end it won't satisfy us. There is something worse than suffering in life, and that is having nothing in life worth suffering for.

Have you identified anything in your life that is worth suffering for? Have you examined your passions, your abilities, and your ideal context to name the one thing that you must do no matter what? Have you ever pressed through the pain to embrace your purpose?

Here we see Jeremiah painfully embrace God's calling grace. Speaking God's words is no longer something he merely can do. It's what he must do, and it is the test of pain that reveals that to him.



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Illustration: Pain Pills

Presenter's Note: *Bring in a large bottle of Advil or Tylenol as an object lesson for this illustration. In our world today, everyone wants to get rid of pain as soon as possible. Entire industries exist for this purpose. Just walk down the aisle of any CVS, Walgreens, or local grocery store and you will see whole aisles devoted to alleviating our pain. In fact, today I brought in large bottle of Extra-Strength Tylenol to demonstrate how accessible this kind of painkiller is. Have a headache? Take a Tylenol. Twist an ankle? Pop an Advil. Have a little heartburn? Chew on some Tums.*

Everybody is looking for easy ways to get rid of pain in their lives. Of course, we are thankful for the relief these different pain medicines bring. But we should ponder whether some of our efforts to get rid of pain are also robbing us of something valuable—our passion. It's impossible to talk about calling or purpose and not talk about passion. And it is impossible to talk about passion and not talk about pain. In fact, the Latin root of the word "passion" actually means "pain." Because it is in the midst of pain and through the pain that passion is formed.

Transition: *It is no coincidence that a culture that is so addicted to numbing its pain also numbs its passion and purpose. Passion is a conviction that becomes contagious because it withstands the test of pain. In our pain our passions are formed. In our pain our abilities are grown. In our pain our ideal context is revealed. Pain is not the opposite of calling—it is the incubator in which calling grows.*

Point #2—Convictions are what you can't do without (vv. 11-12)

Jeremiah's pain is not limited to the physical pain of his circumstances, even as deeply as that physical pain hurt him. Jeremiah hurts not just in his body but in his soul. He aches at the hypocrisy of his people. He longs for acceptance inside his community. He desperately desires truth to be revealed. These are deep convictions that we see emerge in the words of verses 11 and 12.

While it might have been easier for Jeremiah to cater to the expectations of the world around him, Jeremiah just could not imagine true friendship without authenticity. He would never be at home in a world that valued the illusion of truth over the pursuit of it. He refused to settle for

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the status quo if the status quo was ultimately leading to a dead end. These deep convictions motivated Jeremiah as the core of who he was. He couldn't imagine doing life without them, because to settle for that kind of life would be no life at all.

Ultimately Jeremiah could only look to God to validate his core convictions. He had to place his hope in Him and trust God to cultivate a community based on these deep desires. Rather than compromise his convictions, Jeremiah trusted God to confirm them. And in the end, his core convictions showed Israel another way to live. Not everyone responded to them, but a few did. When all was said and done, Jeremiah's commitment to these core convictions left a lasting legacy for Israel forever after.

If calling is about what you can't help but do, then your convictions are the things you can't do without. Calling answers the *"what" question of our lives: what am I called to do?* Convictions, also called "values," answer the *"why" question of our lives: why am I called to it?* Your calling and convictions name the essence of your unique identity. Without these things, life is numb—we exist but we don't truly live. The fire shut up in our bones ultimately consumes us. We live lesser lives and become a lesser version of ourselves.

Conclusion: Lin Hao

Many of us in the West don't remember the Great Sichuan Earthquake. On May 12, 2008 an earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale rocked the country of China. It devastated houses and buildings and left a trail of casualties in its wake. This earthquake caused the largest number of geohazards ever recorded, including 200,000 landslides and more than 800 quake lakes distributed over an area the size of Virginia. But within the havoc, a few heroes emerged.

One story that came out of wreckage was about a boy named Lin Hao. Lin Hao was 9 years old and in the second grade. He was walking down the halls of his school when the earthquake struck. The walls of his school collapsed in on him and his classmates. Right away he was knocked unconscious by the falling walls, but Lin Hao eventually regained consciousness and squirmed his way out of the rubble. But once he made his way out, Lin Hao went back into the rubble and rescued two of his friends by pulling them to safety.

As the story of Lin Hao's heroism started to be told, several reporters gathered around him to ask him a few questions about what he did. One reporter asked him, "Why did you go back into the rubble?" Lin Hao answered, "I'm the hall monitor; it's my job!"



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Each of us has a job too—what I’ve been referring to as our calling. Each of us has something we must do. We could choose to live our lives outside of the rubble. But when we embrace our calling, we choose to go back into it. We risk pain. We risk rejection. We risk being caught in the aftershocks of a broken world. But we do this because it is part of who we are. Motivated by our convictions and calling, we step into a broken world and through the power of God make it beautiful again. We are Christians, it’s what we do!

So today, I’m calling you to you to find your calling and commit to it. I’m calling you to identify your core convictions and hold onto them. I’m calling you choose the harder path to finding the one thing you must do with your life and to do it whatever it costs you. I’m calling you to refuse to compromise the deep gospel convictions of your life and instead trust God to validate them.

If you don’t know what these things are yet, the good news is that we have a process to help you identify them. It will take work but these things are knowable and nameable. And if you do know them and have named them, then the other good news is that this church is committed to be a community that helps you live those things out where you live, work, and play. That’s because 20/20 Vision for Life is what we do

SESSION #4

LIVE OUT GOD'S DREAM





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Session #4: Live Out God's Dream

— Jeremiah 29:4-14 Suggested Reading: *Younique*, ch. 14

Hook: SS Warrimoo

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."
—Soren Kierkegaard

According to legend, on December 30, 1899, the passenger steamer *SS Warrimoo* was quietly knifing its way through the waters of the mid-Pacific on its way from Vancouver to Australia. The navigator had just finished working out a star fix and brought the master, Captain John Phillips, the result. The *Warrimoo's* position was latitude 0 degrees, 31 minutes north and longitude 179 degrees, 30 minutes west.

The first mate said to Captain Phillips, "Do you know what this means? We're only a few miles from the intersection of the Equator and the International Date Line."

Captain Phillips was prankish enough to take full advantage of the opportunity to achieve a navigational freak for the ages. He called his navigators to the bridge to check and double-check the ship's position. He changed course slightly so as to bear directly on his mark. Then he adjusted the engine speed. The calm weather and clear night worked in his favor. At midnight the *Warrimoo* lay on the Equator at exactly the point where it crossed the International Date Line!

The consequences of this bizarre position were many. The forward part of the ship was in the Southern Hemisphere in the middle of summer. The aft part was in the Northern Hemisphere in the middle of winter. The date in the aft part of the ship was December 31, 1899. Forward it was January 1, 1900.

So the *Warrimoo* was in two different days, two different months, two different seasons, two different years, and two different centuries all at the same time.



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Transition: *We don't know for sure whether the story of the SS Warrimoo actually happened. Legend tells us it did, but the experts are divided. What we do know is that if this navigational anomaly did happen, then passengers at the back of the boat would have been left with a decision. They could stay for at least a few moments in today or by walking to the front of the boat they could enter into their tomorrow as the first people to step into the New Year.*

No matter where you are or what the date on the calendar is, you too can step into tomorrow today. We do this by dreaming. Dreaming is an important spiritual practice, but most people have to learn how to do it.

When I'm talking about dreaming today, I am not talking about the go-to-bed-and-wake-up kind of dream. I'm talking about the kind of dream that helps you live wide awake. Dreaming is part of what it means to be human. It is our unique ability to imagine that tomorrow could be different than today.

But when we stop dreaming, we either start fantasizing, or we just click into surviving with our lives. This is where most people live. They fantasize and survive or survive and fantasize—constantly vacillating between the two. We are zombies by day and insomniacs at night. When we live this way, we lose part of our humanity.

God has a different way for us. He wants us to dream and plan rather than survive and fantasize. That's why today I want to talk to you about the spiritual practice of dreaming and planning with your life. It's something we find God calling his people to do in Jeremiah 29.

Text: Jeremiah 29:4-14

Big Thought:
Dream to live if you want to live the dream.

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Review: *For the past few weeks, we have been journeying through the Book of Jeremiah in a series called 20/20 Vision for Life. Throughout this series I have been encouraging you to discover and step into your one-of-a-kind divine design. In the first few weeks we marveled at the unique way that God has designed and destined us. We rejected the false versions of ourselves that we too often slip into and instead turned our ears to God's voice in order to hear who he says we are. Last week I called you to embrace the place of God's calling grace by thinking about and naming your calling and convictions. This week we want to take another step on our journey by inviting you to participate in two deeply spiritual practices—dreaming and planning.*

It must be said right from the beginning that today's passage contains one of the most overused, out-of-context verses in all of the Bible—Jeremiah 29:11. If you've been a Christian for long enough, you can probably quote it from memory. [Read or quote it in your preferred version.] There's a good chance you have it printed on a decorative item in your house.

However, although this verse is often quoted, it is seldom understood. Too often this Scripture has been used to justify the American Dream, which it was never intended to do. Some preachers have pulled it from its context to claim that saying yes to Jesus is equivalent to walking an easy path to health and wealth. Nothing could be further from the truth. Today I want you to hear this passage in its context, because I think if you do, it will give you a whole new way to live.

The setting of today's passage is critical. For years Jeremiah has been prophesying about the destruction of God's people, Israel. He's been warning that its southern kingdom called Judah, which was the only part of Israel still remaining in its homeland, has walked away from God, and devastation, destruction, despair, and death will be the consequence. For all these years, no one has listened to the words that Jeremiah has been called to speak. In fact, they didn't just stop their ears; they also did everything they could to shut him up.

By the time we get to Jeremiah 29, the inevitable has begun to happen. To punish Judah for rebelling against the Babylonian Empire, King Nebuchadnezzar brought an army to ransack the country. After laying siege to Judah's cities and winning the war, Nebuchadnezzar deposed Judah's king and replaced him with a new one he expected to be loyal. Then he tried to break Judah's ability to rebel again by deporting its professional soldiers, its craftsmen, and almost all its leaders—ten thousand people—to Babylon. The Exile had begun.

But Jeremiah was one of those left behind in Judah with most of the population, who were poor peasants. At this moment, Jeremiah's message from God begins to change. He had long preached a message of judgment to those who refused to repent, but here in these verses



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Jeremiah now gives a word of hope and grace and mercy in the form of a letter to the exiles who had been deported to Babylon. Right at the lowest part of Israel's history and in the most miserable situation of the Jewish captives, he calls them to dream and plan. He speaks into their today and calls them into their tomorrow. While the false prophets of the day were selling a fantasy, Jeremiah calls God's people to dream.

Most people confuse dreaming with fantasizing. That's why as we look at Jeremiah 29:4-14 I want to give you three ideas that distinguish God-dreams from human fantasies so that we can learn how to dream with God again.

Point #1—God-dreams face reality; fantasies deny reality

God-dreams start right where we are. We don't start dreaming when finally get out of the mess that we have made with our lives. Instead, God-dreams start by facing our current reality. It is in reality that God meets us with love and hope and faith.

Love helps us deal with what is. No matter what is happening, God loves us just as we are and where we are. There is nothing you can do to make God love you any more, and there is nothing you can do to make God love you any less. So we start by accepting and receiving that love. As we are loved, we regain hope, because even though God loves us as we are, he also loves us too much to keep us where we are.

Now, the first seeds of hope often masquerade as frustration. Frustration is hope in disguise. Frustration looks at our lives and asks, "Is what is what has to be?" With this question, what is gives way to what could be. Finally as hope begins to rise, God begins to speak. And as God begins to speak, hope is turned in to faith. As Paul reminds us in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes from the word of Christ."

This progression of love, hope, and faith is a far cry from naïve optimism. It means that we can face our current reality knowing that we are not defined by our worst decision or confined by our worst day. It means that no matter where we find ourselves, God is still active in our lives. For Israel, this meant that God was with them right in the middle of the Exile. While the false prophets of Jeremiah's day were peddling the fantasy that the exile would be over any day, Jeremiah faced reality by telling Israel that their time in exile would be 70 years.

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But in verse 6, Jeremiah also reminds God's people that God has not given up on his dream. He says, "Increase in number there, do not decrease." This God-dream language comes from the very first pages of the Bible. In Genesis 1-2, God tells our first parents, Adam and Eve, to increase and multiply. He says the same thing to Abraham after the devastating Fall of humanity in Genesis 3 and the futility that followed. These are the words that God repeats here in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles.

So Israel doesn't have to deny their reality, because God is with them in their reality. They don't have to fantasize, because God is still dreaming. Right in the midst of their mess, God is asking Israel to begin dreaming with him by facing their reality.

Illustration: The Stockdale Paradox

In management guru Jim Collins' best-selling book *Good to Great*, he looked at organizations that displayed unusual excellence and identified the characteristics that these companies had in common. Collins illustrated one of them by an interview with Admiral Jim Stockdale.

Admiral Stockdale had been the highest-ranking naval prisoner of war at the Hanoi Hilton during the Vietnam War. In his time in captivity, he persevered in the midst of the torture and after his release was awarded the Medal of Honor by Congress.

Collins asked Stockdale how he made it through such devastating circumstances. Stockdale told Collins that part of what allowed him to survive was that he never gave up believing that in the end he and his comrades would prevail and that this would be the defining moment of his life. Collins then asked a follow-up question: "Who didn't survive?" Stockdale gave a surprising answer—he said, "The optimists."

Collins was confused. He asked, "What do you mean that the optimists didn't survive? I thought you just said that the way you survived was by having a deep belief that in the end that we would win." Stockdale replied, "I did. But don't ever confuse a deep belief that you will win with naïve optimism. The optimists at the Hanoi Hilton thought that we would be out by Christmas. Then Christmas would come and go with no release. Then they thought we would be out by Easter, and Easter would come and go with no release. Eventually the optimists gave up in despair. They died of a broken heart." Stockdale concluded this way: "You have to be able to look at the brutal facts while having a deep belief that in the end you will win."

Collins called this truth the Stockdale Paradox. He noticed that what he saw in Stockdale he also saw in all great companies. On the one hand, these companies were not afraid to face the brutal facts. On the other hand, they held within them a deep belief that in the end that they would win.



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Transition: *What is true of great organizations is also true in our personal lives. Dreaming should never be confused with naïve optimism. Naïve optimism is fantasy, and fantasy will always let you down. Dreaming actually starts with facing the brutal facts, but it does so with love and hope and faith. Love, hope, and faith create the deep belief that in the end we will win, God helping us.*

Point #2—God-dreams work through reality; fantasies try to escape reality

God-dreams start by facing our reality, but they don't end there. God-dreams work through reality.

In Jeremiah 29, Jeremiah describes a tension of Israel's new life. On the one hand, they needed to believe that God would one day bring them back to Jerusalem and restore all that they had lost. Yes, it would be 70 years, but one day they would return, so their stay in Babylon was not permanent. On the other hand, for those 70 years they would live in Babylon. And in Babylon they would need to settle down, build houses, plant gardens, get married, and have children. Have you ever felt caught between Babylon and Jerusalem in your life? You are dreaming of Jerusalem but stuck in Babylon.

At this point in Jeremiah's prophecy, God tells his people that even though he has a dream for Israel, he also has a plan for Babylon. In fact, God says that his people's prosperity isn't just tied to their eventual return to Jerusalem. Instead, God wants his people to prosper in Babylon too. He tells them that their prosperity is tied to the prosperity of Babylon, the very city that dragged them into exile. God tells them to seek and plan for the peace and prosperity of Babylon even while they dream of one day returning to Jerusalem. The hard-to-swallow truth for Israel is that the road to God accomplishing his dream in Israel's life would be filled with ups and downs.

We all want the straight line to the dream. We all want the dream to happen right away. But the truth is that God-dreams rarely proceed in a straight line and they rarely happen on our timetable. Instead, God uses the ups and downs of our lives to make us the kinds of people who can handle the scope and scale of his dream for our lives. See, the question for us is not "Does God want to prosper us?" The question is "Can we handle God's prosperity in our lives?" If we got the straight line to the dream, everything God wants to bless us with would become a curse to everyone around us. We would take the heaven he wants to give us and create hell for everyone around us without even realizing. It's in the ups and downs of life that God builds character in us so that we can handle the prosperity he dreams of giving us.



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Illustration: Bruce Yeany Video

Presenter's Note: Start the video at 3:33 and play the video through to 4:03.

To illustrate what I mean, I want to show you a video of a junior-high physics teacher named Bruce Yeany. Yeany uses a ball and two tracks to conduct a physics experiment with his students. Both tracks begin and end at the same point. The first track is what Yeany calls the high track and it is a straight track from the beginning to end. The second track is what Yeany calls the low track. The low track is filled with ups and downs. The low track is actually seven inches longer than the high track even though they begin and end at the same point.

So Yeany asks his students, "On which track do you think the ball will get to the other end faster?" [See for yourself.](#)

Transition: *This is a fascinating video. Everyone knows the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, so we would assume the high track will win the race. But what we discover is that this isn't the case. The physics behind the experiment has to do with the difference between potential and kinetic (or movement) energy. On the high track, most of the ball's energy stays in potential energy. On the low track, more of the ball's potential energy is turned into kinetic energy. At its lowest points, the ball actually travels faster than the other ball that stays up high the whole time. Even though the low track is seven inches longer than the upper track, the low track still gets the ball to the end in less time.*

I believe this truth of the physical universe demonstrates what God does in our lives. We may want the straight line to the dream; we may want it to happen now. We may believe that the ups and downs in our lives are our dream deferred. But in truth, the ups and downs are what God uses to turn the potential energy of our life into movement energy. They are not the dream deferred—they are the dream defined. It's in the ups and downs that God makes us the kind of people who can handle his dream in our lives.

To navigate the ups and downs of life, we need not only a dream but also a plan. This is exactly what God gives the exiles in Jeremiah 29. God has a dream of the exiles to get back to Jerusalem, but he has a plan for how they are to live in Babylon.

Holding on to dreaming with one hand and planning with the other is difficult for most of us. In this room we have dreamers and planners. The dreamers are skeptical of the planners and the planners are skeptical of the dreamers. Planners are skeptical of the dreamers, because the planners have never seen a dream they can execute. But the dreamers are skeptical of the



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planners because they have never seen a plan that is inspired by a God-sized dream and is more than a big to-do list. But here God tells His people that He has both a dream and a plan. It is the combination of the dream and the plan that helps them work through their reality rather than just trying to escape it.

Point #3—God dreams become reality; fantasies leave you stuck in reality

This is the final difference between God-dreams and fantasies. God-dreams become reality. Fantasies leave you stuck in reality. As enticing as fantasies might be, they never really change your reality. In the end you are right where you started—stuck. But God-dreams do change reality because God-dreams become the new reality.

Israel's history proves it. Seventy years after Israel entered into Exile, they did return to Jerusalem. God did alter their reality according to his dream. Meanwhile, stories of people like Daniel and Esther show us that his people also prospered in exile while they were waiting for the dream to come true. Both the dream and the plan changed their reality.

Conclusion: Confession

In the Christian tradition we have a word for everything that we have been talking about today. It's the word confession. Christians we make two types of confession: a confession of sin and a confession of faith. Our confession of sin is our confession of what is. It's where we go to God and each other to face the reality of the good, the bad, and the ugly in our lives. Our confession of faith is our confession of what will be according to what God has told us. A good plan based on a God-sized dream is a confession of faith.

Today I invite you into confession. I invite you to face reality, to work through reality, and through dreaming and planning to dare to see reality change.

But this invitation is not important for you alone. It is important for everyone around you. Remember, Jeremiah 29 links Israel's prosperity with Babylon's prosperity. As the city prospers, so the exiles will prosper. So, today I leave you with three questions, that I hope will lodge their way into your hearts and souls:

1. Who are you robbing of their prosperity because you are not dreaming and planning with your life?
2. Who is still in poverty because you are not dreaming and planning with your life?
3. Who is still in captivity because you are not dreaming and planning with your life?

Let's be people who dream and plan, because our world's future depends on it. That's our 20/20 Vision for Life.

SESSION #5

INVEST FOR GOD'S BEST





GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Session #5: Invest for God's Best

— Jeremiah 32:6-15 Suggested Reading: *Younique*, chs. 12 & 13

Hook: Environment vs Investment

*"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."
—Jim Elliot*

It is no secret that winter is not something that people who live in warmer climates are very good at. When the temperature dips below 32 degrees, schools are already wondering if they should cancel. The threat of snow brings with it runs on water and bread at the local grocery store. And if it ever does actually snow, everything in the city shuts down. But those who live in colder climates can't afford the luxury of a snow day every time it threatens to snow. Move to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and you will find children headed to school all winter when the temperature is well below freezing. Go to Buffalo, New York, and you will find people making their way to work with feet of snow piled up on the side of the roadways.

So how is it that some people thrive in certain conditions, while others would be paralyzed in a situation not even half as severe? The answer is that people in cold climates don't hope for a change in their environment. Instead, they change their investment. Minneapolis and Buffalo have invested in winter. In cities like Atlanta, Georgia, or Charlotte, North Carolina, that are more invested in the other three seasons than in winter, the barest threat of winter shuts them down. But cities like Minneapolis and Buffalo know that if they don't invest in winter, they will never thrive.

Transition: *When it comes to making a life, most people are asking God to change their environment when God wants them to change their investment. Most people think if God would just change where they work, where they live, or the people they have to work and live with, then their lives would instantaneously be better. We long for a better place or better people, but God invites us to a different way. If you want to change your future, don't just pray for God to change your environment, allow God to change your investment. That is what today's message is all about—how to invest in God's best.*



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Text: Jeremiah 32:6-15

Big Thought:

Dream to live if you want to live the dream.

Review: *For the last several weeks we have been journeying through a series called 20/20 Vision for Life. In this series we have been going through the Book of Jeremiah to gain a glimpse into the life that God has designed and destined us to live, to get a clear view into the true you. Early on we were challenged to turn away from false versions of ourselves and false versions of God, to declare our calling and our convictions, and to dream and plan after God's dream.*

This week we're turning our attention to our investments. We could have the greatest dream and the greatest plan in the entire world, but if we don't choose to invest in them, very few things will change in our lives. The future belongs to those who invest in it. That is why today I want to challenge you to invest in your future.

It must be said right from the beginning that today's passage contains one of the most overused, out-of-context verses in all of the Bible—Jeremiah 29:11. If you've been a Christian for long enough, you can probably quote it from memory. [Read or quote it in your preferred version.] There's a good chance you have it printed on a decorative item in your house.

Today's passage finds Jeremiah in some pretty disturbing circumstances. Last week I talked about how King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon put a new king in charge of the southern Israelite kingdom of Judah, and then he deported everyone from the land who could help Judah to rebel against him. But Judah's king rebelled anyway, and the result was disaster for the nation. The Babylonians came back once more, devastated the land, and captured all the cities except for the capital, Jerusalem. At this point in the story, the Babylonian army is sitting outside the city, waiting for its residents to die of starvation and disease so they can capture it.



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Jeremiah is one of the people stuck inside the city. While everybody in Jerusalem is withering away, Jeremiah has a message from God for them: the Babylonians will win, Judah will lose, Jerusalem will fall, lots of people will die, and the survivors will be deported to Babylon. Their only hope to make it as easy on themselves as possible is to surrender now. Obviously, this is a big message of doom and gloom. The king can't tolerate Jeremiah proclaiming defeat and demoralizing everyone in the city, so he imprisons him in the royal barracks to shut him up.

The only thing worse than starving in a besieged city is being stuck in jail in that city. But in these desperate and difficult circumstances, Jeremiah refuses to be a product of his environment. Instead, he chooses to invest in God's best for his future. Let's look at the story of Jeremiah 32.

Point #1—If you are not sold out to God you will sell out to someone else

The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah while he is under arrest. If I'm Jeremiah, I'm hoping the word of the Lord will say that he is about to release me from prison. But that is not what God says. Instead, God tells Jeremiah to invest in a piece of family property near his hometown as a sign of its future restoration and redemption.

On the surface this looks like a complete waste of money. The land that he is purchasing is under the control of the Babylonian army. It has no value to anyone right now. Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel is probably desperately looking for a buyer as a last-ditch effort to put some kind of food on the table for his children, because the price of bread in Jerusalem is going through the roof.

The only way Hanamel's land could possibly become valuable again is if the Babylonians go back to their country and leave the landowner alive there in Judah to farm it. And keep in mind, Jeremiah is the guy in Jerusalem who has been saying that that is nevergoing to happen! This is why he's imprisoned in the first place.

But God tells Jeremiah to buy the land anyway. This makes no sense, even to Jeremiah! But God tells him to buy it to send a message to his people: the best days of this land are not behind it but in front of it. Not immediately, but far in the future, after the coming Exile.

You need to understand that for an Israelite man, his land was at the heart of his identity and destiny. A whole code of law existed to help people keep their land, because so much of their identity and destiny were tied to it. In this prophetic purchase, Jeremiah is making a prophetic statement. He buys the land not because it is useful to him today, but because it confirms the identity of his people tomorrow. In this purchase Jeremiah refuses to sell out to his present environment and instead shows that he is sold out to God's preferred future.



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

How we behave today is the best indicator of what we believe about tomorrow. Too often, pressed by our present circumstances, we sell out tomorrow's future because we are simply trying to survive today. But Jeremiah shows us a different way. Those who desire God's best must become sold out or else we will sell out. We must be sold out to God's dream that he has placed in front of us. We must be sold out to who he says we are and what he has called us to do. We must be sold out to who he is and what he will do in and through us. It is only by being sold out to God that we won't sell out in our present circumstances.

This is what investment is all about—it's choosing to believe and commit to God's preferred future rather than be overwhelmed and overcome by whatever we are facing right now

Illustration: "now"/"won"

Presenter's Note: *Bring in a large piece of clear plexiglass and a bottle of white shoe polish. You can purchase a cheap piece of plexiglass by going to Walmart and purchasing a large poster frame—the plexiglass will be inside the frame. Write the word now (all lowercase letters) on the front of the plexiglass. Make sure the n has a simple, rounded top (no serif) so that the letter looks exactly the same when you look at it through the other side of the plexiglass.*

It is so easy to get overwhelmed by what we are living through right now. We encounter obstacles, threats, and challenges every day of our lives. These things tempt us to sell ourselves out to something less than God's best, because the now looms so large.

But if we can only see the other side of our now, the side God sees [*turn the plexiglass around*], we would see that we have already won. This is the battle of investment: looking past the *now* to the *won*. It is believing that God is restoring and redeeming all things and that those who choose to invest with him are making the right choice, because they are sold out to the won.

Transition: *Today I am inviting you step to the other side of the glass in the way you think about God and life. I'm challenging you to leverage your now for God's best, because if you are in Christ, you have already won. I'm calling you to stop simply trying to survive with your life and instead invest your life in what God is doing in our world—restoring and redeeming all things.*



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Point #2—We make decisions, but our decisions make us

Every decision we make reveals what we truly prioritize and what we are truly invested in. In fact, the most spiritual thing that you do each day is not your devotions but your decisions. We make decisions, but in the end, our decisions make us. What we choose today determines how we live tomorrow. Whether it is with our money, our time, or our relationships, every day we are investing in something. Do you know what you are investing in? And are you allowing God to direct your investments in life?

The reason Jeremiah invests in this piece of property is because God has told him to do so. In other words, it's because Jeremiah is in touch with God's voice that he knows how best to invest in his future. Otherwise, he would have no clue. God doesn't just invite Jeremiah to dream with him; God invites Jeremiah to invest with him.

God is doing the same kind of thing with us—with our time, our money, and our relationships. While we may not see the impact of these decisions during our lifetime, our decisions will have an impact on those who come behind us. Too often the investments of our life are going in a different direction than the dream God invites us to pursue with him. That is why we must listen to God not just for the what and why of our life, but also for the how. It's why we need to be attentive to God's voice not just one day but every day. It's why all of our decisions should be anchored in what we hear God saying to us.

Illustration: The Cereal Aisle

Every kid who has ever been to the grocery store with their mom or dad knows the pain of walking up and down every single aisle while with their mom and dad while they are shopping. On most aisles, children are simply silent partners watching while their parents choose what to buy. However, there is one aisle where everything changes. It's called the cereal aisle. In this aisle many parents turn to their children and ask them to pick out a box of cereal for the week.

The choices are overwhelming. There are so many different cereals for them to choose from. This is why in the not-too-distant past, marketers would put toys in their cereal boxes. On the back of the box, the toys looked huge. And the promise of the toy inside the box led more than one child to choose a cereal they didn't even like for the promise of the toy inside. The moment they got home, the kid would rush to open the box of cereal to find the toy inside, only to be disappointed by a toy that was incredibly small, pretty unexciting, and likely to break after playing with it for a few minutes. In the end they were left with a whole box of cereal they didn't like.



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Transition: *Life is lived in the cereal aisle. We live in a world that is wooing us to spend our lives investing in toys. On the back of the world's boxes their toys look huge. But if we are not careful, we will trade the substance of our faith for toys that in the end fail to deliver on the promises they make—toys that ultimately leave us unsatisfied.*

That is why today I am calling you to choose differently. I'm asking you to invest in the good stuff—the God-sized stuff that really is the substance of life. I'm asking you to submit your decisions to him. Because when you invest in God's best, I believe you will also find that he also has your best interest in mind.

Conclusion: Reverse Investment

Today we have talked a lot about investments and decisions. I have encouraged you to align your investments to God's dream and to invest in God's best. But did you know that long before you ever invest in God, he has been investing in you? Long before you make any decisions for God, he has been making decisions for your sake. He decided to send his Son Jesus to earth to live a perfect life, die our death, and be raised to life, so that all of us could take part in God's best for life and for our world. In other words, God has made a priceless investment and massive decision out of love for us. When we turned our back on him, he turned his face toward us. When we were useless, he valued us and made us useful. He saw a future for us when we were incapable of creating a future for ourselves. Everything we have in life testifies to his investment in us.

So let's give God a return on his infinite investment by investing the gifts he's given us back into God's best for our world. The future is waiting to be created by those who see what God sees and do what God does. God is inviting you to join him in creating that future today. So let's stop asking God to change our environment and instead let's start allowing God to change our investment with 20/20 Vision for Life.

SESSION #6

LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Session #6: Leave a Lasting Legacy

— Jeremiah 33:14-26 Suggested Reading: Younique, chs. 26 & 27

Hook: Alfred Nobel

Alfred Nobel once said that “every man should get the chance to rewrite his own obituary.” He made this statement after spending the end of his life re-writing his own.

Nobel was a Swedish chemist who invented dynamite in 1866. His invention made him extremely wealthy. Over the course of his life he held over 350 patents and owned factories and laboratories in over 20 countries.

In 1888 Alfred’s brother Ludvig died. A newspaper picked up the story but mistakenly believed that Alfred was the one who died, so the editors printed the wrong obituary. The newspaper called Alfred Nobel “the Merchant of Death,” because Nobel had devised a way to kill more human beings than ever in the history of warfare, and for that he died a very rich man.

Nobel had the dubious privilege of reading his own obituary while sitting at the breakfast table that morning. It was a moment that changed him forever. He decided then and there that dynamite would not be his legacy. In the years that followed, Nobel amended his will to give the vast majority of his wealth away. Along the way, he established prizes in chemistry, physics, physiology, medicine, economics, literature, and most notably peace—the famed Nobel Peace Prize.

Alfred Nobel made a decision that changed his legacy. He wrote a different ending to his life. And now today, we don’t associate Alfred Nobel’s name with war but with peace.

Transition: *If someone were to write the obituary of your life today, what would they write? What would you be remembered for if your life ended right now? How would others tell your story? These are the questions that today’s message is all about. Today we are talking about leaving a lasting legacy with our lives. You may not be too comfortable with what others would write about your life if you died right now, but I’m going to show you that the power of the gospel can change your legacy. As you leave here today, God can begin writing a better, lasting legacy of your life.*



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Text: Jeremiah 33:14-26

Big Thought:

Get ahead on what you want to leave behind

Review: *Today we come to the final sermon in our series 20/20 Vision for Life: A Clear View into the True You. Over the last five weeks we have been working our way through the Book of Jeremiah and have engaged some pretty dynamic thoughts about God's calling on each of our lives. We have peeked into our one-of-a-kind divine design and rejected false versions of ourselves. We have taken time to think about our calling and our convictions. We have dared to dream and plan for the prosperity of others with our lives. And last week, we looked at how those dreams and plans are lived out in how we investment our time, money, and relationships. Today, we're concluding this series by talking about our legacies—how to do our best to get ahead on what we want to leave behind.*

The legacy of our lives is closely related to our investments. As Alfred Nobel's example shows us, what we invest in today often coincides with what we are remembered for tomorrow.

Jeremiah 33 contains a beautiful description of the future that God was leading his people toward even in the midst of the devastating destruction that they were enduring at the time. It's a picture that reminds us that God never gives up on his people. It's a picture that compels us to remember that God can take even the worst moments of our lives and create a wonderful memory. It's a picture that demonstrates the sovereignty of God's purposes and plans and our place in them. It's an invitation to leave a lasting legacy through our own lives within the eternal legacy that God is writing through the course of human history.



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Point #1—Live in the Greatest Story Ever Told

The phrase “the days are coming” is repeated 16 times in the Book of Jeremiah. Seven times these words are used to describe the coming destruction of the Israelite kingdom of Judah and the surrounding nations. The other nine times the words point to a future period of blessing for Israel.

When Jeremiah says “the days are coming,” he reminds us of the sovereign purposes and plans of God. God is writing a story in the history of humanity and his purposes cannot be thwarted.

When Jeremiah prophesies in chapter 33, Judah is on the brink of collapse. In the not too distant future, Jerusalem will become a desolate waste and everything will be destroyed. But this experience will be merely a chapter in Israel’s history. It may feel like the final word, but it won’t be. Here in verses 14 through 26, God reminds Jeremiah of his covenant with his people and commits once again to seeing that covenant fulfilled. This covenant is marked by a king from the line of David on the throne and priests from the tribe of Levi serving in the temple.

As Christians, we know that the ultimate fulfillment of this covenant promise has, is, and will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is both the greatest King and ultimate High Priest. When his name is called, every knee will bow, and every day he stands at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf. This is God’s purpose and plan. He continues to work it out in the world, and he will not be denied.

So for the Christian, the quest to leave a lasting legacy begins by getting in early on the legacy that God himself is leaving in the world. By understanding and living consciously in God’s story, we find that our own personal stories gain their greatest significance. It is in God’s legacy that our personal legacies become eternal, lasting long beyond our life and death and pointing forward to a day of their ultimate contribution. We are not the first in the long line of saints to forge our legacy in this way and we will not be the last.

We stand on the shoulders of giants. Over and over in the verses that we have read together in these past weeks, we hear the names of those who have gone before us. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David lived great stories told in the Bible, but their lives’ greatest meaning is found in the ultimate story that their individual stories point to, the salvation story that the whole Bible tells. These great saints staked the legacy of their lives on the legacy of God’s life. That is why we still remember their names today. We stand on their shoulders as people who long to live similar kinds of lives, peering into the work that God has been doing through time and creating with God a future that cannot fail.

GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

Illustration: The Parable of the Brickmakers

There's a story of a visitor walking into a town who encountered three workmen engaged side by side in the same activity. "What are you doing?" he asked the first workman. The workman looked up with an annoyed look on his face, "I'm making bricks," he replied curtly. The visitor asked the next worker, "And what are you doing?" The workman looked up with a determined look on his face. "I'm building a wall," he replied decisively. Finally the visitor asked the third workman, "What are you doing?" The workman looked up with a rapturous look on his face. "I'm building a cathedral," he replied earnestly, "and it's going to be the most beautiful cathedral in the world."

Transition: *How we do what we do is tied to what we believe God is doing. The greatest legacy that we leave is deeply dependent on the legacy that we believe God is leaving. No matter what we are called to do, our lives bear the shine of lasting impact in light of a vision of what God is doing in our world. If we could only see things for what they are, our lives are not simply making bricks. If we are attached to God's life, we are building a cathedral. God is in the business of redeeming and restoring all things. So whenever we see what we are doing through the lens of what God is doing, then whatever it is we are called to do has greater impact and eternal significance.*

Point #2—Leave Behind a Story Worth Telling

God's story is what ultimately gives our lives meaning, so the story we write with our lives is a timeless memorial. Everything we build with our hands will one day fade away. Everything we accumulate will one day be owned by someone else. Only the way we choose to live our lives has eternal ramifications. We stand on the shoulders of giants, but those who leave a lasting legacy with their lives are the ones who grow shoulders wide enough for those coming after them to stand on.

This what Jeremiah's life and legacy is all about. As we have already seen throughout our series, Jeremiah was not always confident and secure in his own identity. He was not free from anxiety or exempt from pain. He wrestled with his own questions for God, and he was far from perfect. But because he lived his life fully integrated with God's story, we are still reading his story. Those who came after him continued to point his story as they wrote their own stories. Both Jesus and Paul quoted Jeremiah in their own ministries. And today we read his words again as we dare to write our own.

It is worth mentioning that Jeremiah had to write his own story twice, so to speak. The first copy of his book was burned by one of the kings of his day so that his story and words would never be remembered. This reminds us that leaving a lasting legacy will not always be easy. But if we persevere it is possible. As Neil Cole says, "Finishing well is not what we do at the end of our lives; it's what we do every day of our lives."



GET A CLEAR VIEW INTO THE TRUE YOU SERMON SERIES

That is why in this series we have laid out a pathway on how to live our lives well every day. It starts by discovering our divine design. It continues by rejecting false versions of ourselves and returning to who God says that we are. It is a life driven by our calling and convictions. It is a life propelled forward by dreaming and planning with God, and investing accordingly. When we live out all these things daily, we create a lasting legacy. This is the clear view to the true you that we have been journeying toward. It's how we live with 20/20 Vision for Life.

Illustration: Looking-Glass Self

The term "looking-glass self" was created by American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley and introduced in his work "Human Nature and the Social Order." A looking-glass is an old-fashioned term for a mirror; our looking-glass self is how we think we appear to others. Cooley proposed that we become whatever the most important person in our life thinks that we are. This can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on who we give the power to be the ultimate voice in our lives.

Transition: *Over the past six weeks, I have done my best to open your ears to God's voice in your life. I've tried to help you get a clear view into the true you not by telling you who I think you are but by helping you hear from God who he says you are. I hope is that his voice will be the most important voice in your life and that who he says you are is who you will ultimately become.*

Conclusion: The Beginning, Not the End

Today I want to finish this series with a confession. As much as I hope that any series of messages I preach would spark transformation in your life, I know that every message I speak has limitations. These are no exception.

The stuff we have been looking at over the past six weeks is way more than a six-week journey. It is a lifelong journey of faith. As I said in my opening message, I am under no illusion that your whole life is going to change just by hearing these messages. At best I am just one voice pointing to a far greater voice for you to listen to—the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus.

If you have been moved at all by what we have discovered together, I want to invite you to continue the journey in a process that will help you go deeper into all that I have invited you into here. It's a process called Younique. It's not a perfect process—it has its own limitations too. But my hope is that we will be a church where more and more people living out their one-of-a-kind divine design. As each of us do so, then together as a church, we will more fully represent Christ together. That is the best vision for life we can ever have.