

**“REMEMBER...”**

(Revelation 2:1-5)

© 2007 Rev. Dr. Brian E. Germano

**[PROP NEEDED: DVD Clip from The Lion King]**

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 8-5-07]

–I–

1. Read Text: Revelation 2:1-5 and Pray.
2. [SHOW DVD-CLIP FROM DISNEY’S THE LION KING (From 1:05:50 to 1:06:58)...]

A--“...*You have forgotten who you are, and so you have forgotten me.... Remember who you are.... Remember who you are....*”

1–These, of course, are words from Mufasa to his son Simba.

2–But I believe that they’re also words that GOD might often say to His church, as well: “*Remember Who You Are.*”

B--This was certainly the case with the church at Ephesus that we read about in today’s scripture reading from Revelation 2.

1–In a vision from God, John (the author) is told to write a letter to that church which first of all commends them for what they’re doing *right* for the cause of Christ.

2–Yet in Verses 4-5, he’s told to write these words from God, “*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. [So,] remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.*”

3–In other words, even though they were doing all kinds of good things in God’s name, *they had forgotten who they were and to what they were called* (i.e., what we would today call their Purpose and Vision), and needed to be reminded again.

3. You know, just as with the church at Ephesus, we Christians in our churches today also need to take time occasionally to go back and “remember” our Purpose and Vision.

A–As we finish up summer and prepare to welcome many guests as we begin a new school year, I think it’s vital that we take time to do this today: ...

B–...to remember *who we are* and *to what we’re being called* by remembering OUR church’s Purpose and Vision, and how they should shape our life together as followers of Christ.

–II–

4. Let's start by recalling our church's **PURPOSE** (also called our "**MISSION**"). We find it on the front of our bulletins and newsletters, on our letterhead, website, and Jim and I (and Mary) often even repeat it when do our welcome each Sunday.

A–What is it? Say it with me: "*Sharing the Love & Light of Jesus with a Changing World.*"

1–More than a simple slogan, this is "who we are" as a church – it's our fundamental identity – our "reason for being."

2–And as such, *everything* we say and do – all our ministries, programs, committee work, etc. – should be measured by how well it helps us accomplish this.

B–Now, this Purpose essentially has three major elements, each of which is important and connect with the others.

5. First of all, the "LOVE" of Jesus that we're to "*share*" is constant and unconditional. <sup>1</sup>

A–It's accepting of all, forgiving of all, and compassionate towards all. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, it "*is not boastful or arrogant or rude*" (Verses 4-5).

B–So this means that if we're to share this kind of love with *others*, then we need to practice it ourselves.

1–We can't be "*boastful, arrogant, or rude*" to one another;

2–We've got to be forgiving when we make mistakes and hurt one another;

3–We need to go out of our way to be welcoming and accepting of guests and visitors, including remembering to respect and honor those who do not look, believe, or even worship like we do.

6. In addition to sharing the "*love*" of Jesus, our Purpose/Mission says that we're also to be sharing the "LIGHT" of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Now, physical light has at least two functions, which I believe have spiritual parallels in our church.

A–First of all, physical light *illuminates* an environment, enabling us to see what's around so we can interact with it – it literally reveals "truth" for the purpose of transformation.

1–Well, in the same fashion, God's "light" through Jesus also reveals truth about who *we are*, enabling us to become more and more of who *God* wants us to be – or as the Bible says, we're made more "*holy*" by His love.

2–So if physical light illuminates to reveal and transform, then that's what we're to do spiritually as a church, as well: we're to reflect God's light, enabling people to see both who they *are* and who they can *be* when transformed by Christ.

B–A second function of physical light is *to protect and show the way to safety*.

1–To convey this sense of our purpose/mission in a more tangible way, a number of years ago our church’s leaders adopted a lighthouse as our church’s logo  
**[Refer to Logo on PPT].**

2–Think about what a lighthouse does: warns ships of dangerous, rocky shores, and guides them to safety.

3–Well, as a church we’re to do no less: warn others (in loving ways) of the dangers of life *without* God (such as fear, despair, hopelessness), and point them towards safety through a life *with* God (a life filled with joy, peace, and hope).<sup>3</sup>

7. The third element of our purpose/mission is that we carry out our ministry within the context of a constantly “*CHANGING WORLD.*”

A–In other words, while our fundamental *message* about Jesus’ love and light (i.e., our Purpose) never changes (it’s like spiritual DNA running throughout our church’s history), the *methods / tools* we use to accomplish it *can and should* change.<sup>4</sup>

B–What works to reach one generation with the “love and light of Jesus” doesn’t always work for future ones.

1–The ways we do worship, evangelism, missions, and education are *not* “one size fits all,” but instead need to change occasionally to effectively connect with each new successive generation.

2–So, for example, our “HeartLight” worship service is currently reaching people for Christ that may never even come and try out a more traditional service.

C–So, then, part of our identity involves the offering of ministries which are creative, fresh and alive, but which still convey Christ’s unchanging “love and light.”

–III–

8. Yet, if our church’s Purpose/Mission describes “who we *are*,” then our Vision describes what we believe God is most calling us to *do* in the immediate future to embody that identity.

A–To this end, as a church we spent a good portion of 2006 discerning God’s Vision for our immediate future, and what we heard is that we believe – over the next 10 years – we’re to be “***Reaching our local and global community with the gospel, beginning with an intentional focus on young families and young adults, with an appreciation for our older generations.***”<sup>5</sup>

B–Now, there are also several key words and themes in this statement that are absolutely vital for us to understand and practice.

9. First of all, there’s the idea of reaching our local and global “*Community.*”

A–This means, first of all, that our ministry is *not* to be about ourselves, but about others.

1–*Not* primarily focused *inward* on serving our members who are already here, but focused *outward* on serving those in our community who are *not yet here*

2–*Not* about what makes *us* comfortable, but what we can do to meet the needs of those around us. <sup>6</sup>

B–This is why ministries like our Lighthouse Academy, Concerts Under the Arbor, and church-sponsored mission trips to places like New Orleans and Kenya are so vitally important – because they give us an outward focus by connecting us with, and helping us to serve, our “local and global community.”

10. Next, there’s the phrase that says we intend to do this by beginning with an “*Intentional focus on young families and young adults.*”

A–60% of our local community is made up of people 40 years old or younger, but this comprises only about 38% of our church’s membership.

B–So, in order to close this “generation gap,” next week at our two “Vision Plan Information Sessions,” you’ll hear how our Vision over the next decade includes ministries, staffing and programs that can help us to attract and meet the spiritual needs of these generations.

C–It’s not that we plan to ignore the needs of *other* generations, but simply that our church programming has *already ignored* the needs of these younger ones in recent years – so our initial plans merely correct this deficiency.

11. Of course, if we’re to truly become the church that God wants of us, then it’ll also require the involvement of *all* generations. This is where the final emphasis of our Vision comes.

A–You know, we wouldn’t be where we are and who we are today as a church if it weren’t for those of you who’ve paved the way in the past.

B–That’s why our Vision includes “*an appreciation for our older generations*” – ways for us not only to thank and value those of you who’ve helped us become who we are today,...

1–...but also an invitation for you to continue to share your wisdom and experience – to be mentors and role-models for our younger generations.

2–If we as a church are to effectively reach today’s young people in the same way that generations of the past reached *you*, then we need your help and flexibility.

C–In fact, as members of our veteran generations, *your* legacy can be that many people find Christ in the *future* in large part because of your affirmation and support *today*.

D—So our Vision, then, is the most immediate means for us to accomplish our Purpose/Mission – it’s just a first step, but it’s an important one.

–IV–

12. My point is that the writer of today’s scripture believed that before either we as individual Christians or we as a church we can go forward into the future, we must first recall our “reason for being” over time, and our calling to ministry for the immediate future.

A—Here at East Cobb UMC, “who we are” (our Purpose/Mission) involves “*Sharing the Love and Light of Jesus with a Changing World.*”

B—And our immediate calling to bring that to fruition (our Vision) involves “*Reaching our Local and Global community with the gospel of Jesus, beginning with an intentional focus on young families and young adults, with an appreciation for our older generations.*”

C—It’s my prayer that as our Fall ministries and programs start back and we begin welcoming new guests, not only we as a church but also we as individual Christians will seek to live these callings daily – to “**REMEMBER** who we are in Christ Jesus.”

13. [PRAY]

#### **ENDNOTES:**

1. This part of our purpose/mission is based on 1 John 4:11-20.
2. This part of our purpose/mission is based on Matthew 5:14-16.
3. Like many lighthouses which function as “life-saving stations,” our church exists *not* as a museum for perfect people, but as a “soul-saving station” for sinners.
4. This part of our purpose/mission is based on Isaiah 43:16-21.
5. Throughout our church’s recent “Ministry Growth Campaign” called “Let God Rock” (Fall 2006), this Vision was expressed in narrative form through the story of the Israelites crossing through the Jordan River into the “Promised Land,” found in Joshua 4-5.
6. Some people call this the difference between being a “Mission” church and a “Chapel” church.