

VISION 2021

RECALIBRATE

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:3-6; 20:1-3; 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 4:1-5:2

Last week I shared with you that our 2021 Vision for Metro was summed up in the words “Refresh — Renew — Rebuild — Recalibrate!”

Pastor Chris unpacked “Refresh and Renew” — Pastor Travis zeroed in on “Renew” — J.D. pointed out those areas within Metro that need rebuilding. I closed by sharing how rebuilding those ministries are so important to us because those ministries are the means by which we refresh one another.

This morning I’m going to unpack the final element of our vision for 2021 — RECALIBRATE.

RECALIBRATE = To calibrate (an instrument or device) again or differently.

As Christians there are times when we need to be **RE**calibrated

2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT) ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

Calibrate —

1. To determine the **correct position, value, capacity** (the ability to receive or contain; or hold power);
2. To set an instrument **so that** readings taken from it are **absolute** rather than **relative**

The Scriptures not only show us when and where we **need Recalibrating** — they also provide us with the standards of our King to which we’re to calibrate.

From Genesis to Revelation God has been very clear about:

1. The position of His redeemed in relationship to fallen culture.

2. The value (identity) of His redeemed in relationship to fallen culture (salt, light, citizens of a heavenly Kingdom)
3. The capacity — the ability of His redeemed — to receive, contain and hold His love, His grace, His mercy and power in relationship to fallen culture.
4. The way He has intended His redeemed people to live in fallen culture so that fallen culture can get an absolute reference to the heart of our King, the nature of His Kingdom and what it means to be citizens of His Kingdom.

We are going to spend the next ten weeks or so of 2021 looking at the first twelve verses of Matthew 5 — best known as “the Beatitudes.” They are the absolute reading of the character of Our King to which His Kingdom and His citizens are calibrated.

This morning I want us to break ground on that series by zeroing in on number 4 (above) — zeroing in on the way the LORD intends His redeemed people to live in fallen culture so that fallen culture can get and absolute reference to the heart of our King, the nature of His Kingdom and what it means to be citizens of His Kingdom.

WE CANNOT MISS THIS — **Genesis 1–11** is occupied with humanity as a whole and with the problem of evil that pervaded ALL of humanity. The story of Israel, which begins at **chapter 12**, is God’s answer to the problem of humanity.

Genesis 12:1–3 (CSB) ¹The Lord said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

All of God’s dealings with Israel are actually God taking care of His unfinished business with all of humanity. Israel existed because of God’s desire to redeem and reconcile to Himself people from every nation through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

What we celebrated on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is MASSIVE! We celebrated the birth of the One who **completes** the promise of God to Abraham — completes the story of the Old Testament.

THIS IS HUGE — The **unique status** of Abraham and his descendants and their **unique experience** of God's redeeming power **speaks to ALL** who have believed that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham — the promised Savior of the world who alone can forgive sin; who alone can redeem men and women from the penalty and power of sin; who alone can reconcile men and women to God who is life; who alone makes a way for us to live in the presence of God forever in a New Heaven and a New Earth.

1 Corinthians 10:11 (CSB) ¹¹These things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND that as we look at how their unique relationship with God speaks to the church — the church does not replace Israel. God has unfinished business with Israel as a nation that centers on their Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Israel's **existence** was owing to God's unique intervention in the life of a man named Abraham. We are clearly in the bounds of Scripture to say: *"God so loved the world that he chose Israel."* Israel was going to be "the womb" (if-you-would) through which God would bring the Savior of the world. God would give His only begotten Son through the descendants of Abraham — and specifically through the descendants of a king named David.

Israel's **preservation** as a nation was owing to God's unique redemptive acts — especially rescuing the descendants of Abraham from **genocide** under the hand of Pharaoh in Egypt! He did it in a powerful way — showing the gods of Egypt to be nothing before Him — proving that He alone is God. He referred to their deliverance with the term **redemption**.

*Deuteronomy 7:8 (CSB) ⁸But because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors, he brought you out with a strong hand and **redeemed you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.***

That redemption involved the slaughter of a lamb without spot and without blemish — anticipating the sacrificial death of THE Lamb of God, Jesus.

STAY WITH ME HERE!

ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE was owing to God's unique intervention in the life of a man named Abraham. ISRAEL'S PRESERVATION as a nation was owing to God's unique redemptive acts.

Exactly 90 days after God redeemed them from bondage and death in Egypt they arrived at Mt. Sinai (sometimes referred to as Mt. Horeb). Here's what God said to Moses.

Exodus 19:3–6 (CSB) “This is what you must say to the house of Jacob and explain to the Israelites: ⁴‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now if you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my own possession out of all the peoples, although the whole earth is mine, ⁶and you will be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation.’ These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites.”

THIS IS SO HUGE — **Christopher Wright** (Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament)

*“Israel’s unique historical experience was not a ticket to a cozy state of privileged favoritism. Rather it laid upon the people a **missionary task** and a **moral responsibility**.”*

Beginning in **Exodus 20** God frames the way His unique, redeemed people was to live out their covenant relationship with Him. We call them commands — they called them “words” or “statutes.” The first 10 are very famous, right?! We find the rest of those terms laid out in **Leviticus**, **Numbers** and **Deuteronomy** — 613 in total — but He eases them in with the first 10!

We need to understand that the Decalogue (the 10 commandments) has a context!

HERE'S THE PICTURE — God has rescued a people to Himself. They are a **unique people** among all the peoples of the earth in their origin. They are a unique

people among all the peoples of the world in their preservation / their redemption. Their unique origin and redemption is wrapped up in their **unique purpose** of being the people through whom God would bring salvation to ALL the peoples of the world.

The terms of the covenant were not the means by which they would **earn** their unique status as the redeemed people of God. God wanted the descendants of Abraham to be unique — to be a contrast community among the nations that were serving false gods — a people who would stand in contrast to the peoples that were organizing their lives without God and against God.

At the very center — the very essence of their contrast in the world was the very first command

Exodus 20:1–3 (CSB) ¹Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. ³Do not have other gods besides me.

These terms were intended to shape this special people, this uniquely redeemed people into a people on mission for YHWH in the world — shape them into a nation that was holy (set apart) unto their redeeming God. They would be a nation that was *other than* all other nations in the God they worshipped — in the things they valued — in the way they treated one another — in the way they lived. CONTRAST!! And all the while — they were still His special instrument — the people through whom Jesus would be brought into the world

When this special people, this uniquely redeemed people had no regard for the terms of the covenant — especially concerning loyalty to the only true God — they no longer looked like the unique, redeemed people of God! they actually became **just like** the nations around them.

Amos 9:7 (CSB) ⁷Israelites, are you not like the Cushites to me?

In our English Bibles the section of the Old Testament we call the historical books gives to us the brutally honest account of how by and large this special and uniquely redeemed people failed to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But this is interesting and worth remembering in the new year when we once again

begin our calendar of reading through the Bible. In the day of Jesus the Old Testament existed in the form of a three-part collection of scrolls: Torah, Nevi'im, and Kethubim. I want to take a second to look at the second collection of scrolls.

Nevi'im = The Prophets. Besides containing Isaiah – Jeremiah – Ezekiel and the Book of the Twelve (Hosea-Malachi) also contained the books of Joshua – Judges – Samuel – Kings! Those books were not considered merely historical — they were considered to be prophetic. One guy called them “The Minority report” because they told the history of Israel — not from man’s point of view — but from God’s. And from God’s point of view the nation had massively failed in its mission and witness — failed to be the “contrast community” God intended them to be.

Despite the failure of Israel God was faithful to the promise he made to Abraham. He was faithful to speak more and more about the coming of Jesus through the prophets. Jesus — Son of God — promised Messiah and Savior of the world came into the world as a descendant of Abraham and from the kingly line of David and shed His blood to redeem us.

Paul tells us that all the things written in the Nevi'im concerning the way God looked at the history of Israel (how God saw their failure to live in the world as His contrast Covenant community) **were written for** the sake of all who believe with the hearts on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament the apostle Peter dips into the language of God concerning Israel to tell Christians about their mission and witness

***1 Peter 2:9 (CSB)** ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Though we do not replace Israel — Israel pictures and anticipates the fact that God desires every authentic Christian — and every community of Christians to be a contrast people!

Jesus called His disciples “the Salt of the Earth... and if the salt has lost its savor what good is for except to be trodden under foot.” Jesus called us “the Light of

the World” — “A City on a Hill.” The Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount define the way His disciples were to live as a contrast community in the unbelieving world.

Matthew 6:32–33 (CSB) ³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Following Jesus is a radical life. It is not a matter of “calibrating our lives to fallen culture” (its values, ideologies and ways) with a side order of Jesus — a “twist” of Jesus.

I recently came across an article in which the author described Christians and churches whose mission and witness was in large part pretty much calibrated to the values, ideologies and ways of fallen culture but “with a twist of Christianity”.

I am not religious, so it is not my place to dictate to Christians what they should and should not believe. Still, if someone has a faith worth following, I feel that their beliefs should make me feel uncomfortable for not doing so. If they share 90 percent of my lifestyle and values, then there is nothing especially inspiring about them. Instead of making me want to become more like them, it looks very much as if they want to become more like me. ~ Ben Sixsmith December 6, 2020 The Spectator.

The New Testament describes the way we’re to live out our New Covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus said *“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:20 CSB).* Jeremiah spoke of this New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31).

In his letter to the 1st century Christians in Ephesus the apostle Paul spends three chapters describing what God has done for us in, through, with and by Jesus to make **US** His unique people. If you’re a Christian it’s because God has dealt with **YOU** in a unique, personal, powerful and radical way in, with, through and by Jesus!

Then Paul spends the last three chapters telling us what it looks like to **live** a contrast life in a world that is living without Jesus and against Jesus.

Here are some snippets. As we read them, I'd like us to ask ourselves a few questions:

*Am I that kind of a **contrast person** in the world?*

*Is **Metro** that kind of a **contrast community** in the world?*

*Does the world look at **me** individually — look at **us** as a community of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ — and say: “That doesn’t look like me or sound like me — It’s striking — It’s beautiful — but it also makes me feel a bit uncomfortable!”*

Ephesians 4:1–3 (CSB) ¹*Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to **walk worthy** of the calling you have received,*

Paul has already said that they have been saved by grace through faith — He is NOT saying that they have to walk worthy in order to BECOME citizens of the Kingdom. Instead — He is saying: Now that you ARE by grace a citizen of the Kingdom here’s the framework for being the contrast community I saved you to be.

Ephesians 4:1–3 (CSB) ¹*Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received,* ²*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,* ³***making every effort** to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

EFFORT — BEARING — WALKING

Ephesians 4:17; 20–24 (CSB) ¹⁷*Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should **no longer walk** as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts.....*

Not only are we to make the effort to WALK in THIS manner — We are also to make the conscious decision to NOT WALK in THAT manner because making those decisions is what it looks like to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 4:20–24 (CSB) ²⁰But that is not how you came to know Christ, ²¹assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to **take off** your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, ²³to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

DON'T WALK in THAT manner! Take this stuff off!

²⁴and to **put on** the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

Not only are we to **take off** certain things. We're to **put on** others things
There's a way to walk worthy — and a way we're not supposed to walk.
And along the way you're going to be kind and you're going to be gentle and
you're going to patient — And you're going to work hard to maintain the unity
of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:31–32 (CSB) ³¹Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. ³²And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

You see, the forgiving has already been done by God. But He says —
Now that YOU are a forgiven people — YOU be kind to one another — YOU be
compassionate to one another — YOU be forgiving one another.

Ephesians 5:1–2 (CSB) ¹Therefore, be imitators of God,

It is not a matter of “whoever imitates God best gets to be saved.” It's **because**
you are His unique purchased possession — because you have been redeemed
by His own blood for the power and penalty of sin — imitate Him!

Ephesians 5:1–2 (CSB) ¹Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, ²and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.

DON'T MISS THIS — NONE of those things EARN our salvation — EARN our status as the beloved of God, adopted children of God, members of the household of God and heirs of salvation. Our salvation and our privileged relationship with God are all of grace — received by faith. But those things do describe the way our Lord and Savior wants our lives to look like.

In another letter Paul describes the way the believers in Thessalonica lived in contrast to pagan culture

1 Thessalonians 1:8–10 (CSB) ⁸For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith in God has gone out. Therefore, we don't need to say anything, ⁹for they themselves report what kind of reception we had from you: how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

ALL OF THAT stood in stark contrast to the pagan culture they lived in. There's one more I want to close with. It's from Philippians 2 — a passage I'm sure most of you are familiar with.

Philippians 2:3 (CSB) ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit,

Now why would Paul have to say that? Because even though we're redeemed we all have some selfish ambition to deal with. We need to recalibrate because every day we meet the resistance of fallen culture that says our identity is rooted in what we do and how much we're appreciated for what we do.

He says that because we need to **RE**calibrate the way we think and live to the heart and the way of Jesus. And here's the great news — Paul told these same people that God not only began this good work in us — He will complete it!

Philippians 2:3 (CSB) ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.

THAT does not look like the world that is organizing itself without God and against God.

Philippians 2:4–7 (CSB) ⁴Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. ⁵Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, ⁶who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. ⁷Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man,

Paul is exhorting us to **calibrate** the way we think and live to the way Jesus thinks — and the way Jesus lived.

Philippians 2:7–11 (CSB) ⁷Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, ⁸he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross. ⁹For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth—
¹¹and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Then Paul says

Philippians 2:13 (CSB) ¹³For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

God is at work in us to REFRESH — RENEW — REBUILD and RECALIBRATE.

Guys — There is that work that only God can do. He alone is the origin of New Life in Jesus. He alone has done everything to redeem us to Himself and for Himself.

But He asks us LIVE as a contrast people in the world. And He promises to give us everything we need to do that.

The **refreshing** and the **renewing** and the **empowering work** of the Holy Spirit.
Grace upon grace upon grace empowering of the Holy Spirit

IT IS TIME for us to ask — As those saved by grace through faith alone

WHO are we supposed to BE in this world?

HOW are we supposed to think in live?