



**God's vision for his church**  
**1 John 3:1-24**

**8am - Testimony (Sandra De Stadler)**

Sandra, please would you come forward.

Good morning church family. Sandra asked if she could share a few words with us this morning. For those of you who don't know Sandra, she is facing a big battle with Cancer... but she is one courageous lady, and she loves the Lord with all her heart.

(Thank and honour her afterwards).

**Introduction**

Well church. Today will be my final message to you as this year. I will be taking the final part of my long leave after today and I will be back in January. I am confident that as a church community, we are all in the Lord's hands, not mine, praise the Lord for that! and I know that in my absence, Pastor Tristan will head things up well - with Pastor Ian in strong support. I am so grateful to both of them, the rest of the staff, and leadership.

**Summer of Love**

We are in a series at the moment called Summer of love, and we are in John chapter 3 today. I have called the message;

## God's vision for his church

In the world today, we've all been taught that if you want to achieve something, in your personal life, or in business, you've got to have a clear vision!

We know this is true, because in life, often nothing happens until somebody starts dreaming. Every accomplishment started off first as a idea in somebody's mind. It started off as a dream. it started off as a vision, a goal.

I have learn that if you don't have a goal, for our church, our default goal is to remain the same. And if we aim at nothing, we're definitely going to hit it. So a church without a vision is never going to grow. So as a Pastor, it is my great desire for us to know God's vision for our church.

God, has got a vision for his church. I hope you believe that today.

In Proverbs 29 we are reminded;

**“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” (Prov 29:18, KJV)**

Where there is no vision from God, a church can often end up becoming, confused, frustrated, aimless.

We recently completed another Alpha course with a great group of people, and during this time I was reminded of the ministry of Jackie Pullinger, who was in one of the Alpha videos we watched.

Jackie has spent her life working with the poor and the destitute, gang members, heroin and opium addicts in Hong Kong. She has helped thousands come off drugs through the power of the Holy Spirit. She has seen transformation in so many peoples lives and has made a huge impact in that city.

Jackie wrote the following;

*“I have spent over half my life in a dark, foul smelling place because I had a vision. I had a vision of another city ablaze with light, it was my dream. There was no more crying, no more death or pain. The sick were healed, addicts set free, and the hungry filled. There were families for orphans, homes for the homeless, and new dignity for those who lived in shame. I had no idea how to bring this about, but with ‘visionary zeal’ imagined introducing people to the only one who could change it all - Jesus.”*

Vision is a ‘holy discontent’ - a deep dissatisfaction with what is, combined with a clear grasp of what could be. It is a picture - a mental sight - of a future that inspires hope.

But here's the thing. Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision is a nightmare! But vision combined with action can change the world.

So today, as we look at John chapter 3, John the Grandfather of the church - wants to show us the vision that God has for his church.

Lets pray.

*Father, thank you for your word, thank you for your spirit. Please would you help us to see, and understand your vision for your church. Not our plans. Not our man made marketing gimmicks. But the real thing. Please speak to us. Please help us. Because we need you. In Jesus name we ask it, amen.*

Amen. Our text today begins in 1 John, chapter 3, verse 1;

**See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:1-2)**

Wow. Church. Do you realise how much God loves you? Brother and sister, are you aware of the extravagant love of the Father for you?

How great is the love that the Father has lavished on us! That we should be called children of God. That is what we are. Children of God.

You see church, God has a very clear vision for us - he has a vision of a church family. There are many important things that God is doing in his church, but at the heart of it all, he is adopting people into his family. God has;

### **A vision of church family**

This our first point today. A vision of church family! Yes, God is doing many things in the world - but if you want to know his grand vision, if you want to know what God is doing - he is growing his family!

I love that we have such a big group of young marrieds with babies at the moment! On Thursday I was up at the Cape Point Market with my family and I just sat on the grass, eating my Japanese chicken pokey bowl thing, and watched them. There were babies all over the place! Its awesome. It seriously is a summer of love! :)

But I wonder if you've noticed this thing that people say when someone has a baby? Parents will often get told things like; "Oh he looks so much like his dad!" or "Wow, she really has her mothers's eyes!"

The babies are like little 'mini-me's' of the parents. Right?

With other families, the physical resemblance might not be so obvious, but, give it some time, and you will quickly see a real resemblance when it comes to character and behaviour!

In our scripture today, Grandfather John starts chapter three with a great reminder.

If you believe in Jesus, you are part of His family!

That is mind-blowing. Church, don't ever get too familiar with the awesomeness of that. That we get to be part of God's family. That we get to be adopted into God's family, and are so greatly loved.

And don't miss this - God's vision for his church is to build family. That's why that is splashed so clearly all over the wall in the foyer. We want to influence our community, build families, and reach the next generation.

Now that is a wonderful vision. Its a God vision. But remember, vision without action, is merely a dream. And I don't just want us to be a church that has great dreams, but no action! So I want to encourage you to get involved in building God's family.

I wanted to take some time this morning to also tell you about some ways we are aiming to do that.

In the new year we will be starting a **Alpha Marriage Course**. We hoped to begin it sooner, but for various reasons, we felt it best to start with a bang in the new year. It begins on 15 Feb. The day after Valentines Day. Numbers are limited, so don't miss out. We are looking for some host couples to help us run it, and we will tell you more about that in January, so watch this space!

Also in the new year, when schools begin again, we are launching kids-church for **pre-schoolers**, and for our **teenagers!** Its so important that we use the opportunity we have on Sunday mornings to reach the next generation, and support families. We've got some great volunteers signed up to help us run these. So if you've got pre-schoolers or teenagers in the house! We've got plans!

Then with our **Carols on the Common** event re-starting this year after our Covid-break, we feel that this is the right time to revisit our plans to plant a church in Noordhoek. We are in the final stages of securing a little coffee shop space in Noordhoek on Sunday mornings. Our hope is to encourage many of the Noordhoekers at the Carols, to come along to that when it launches next year.

Then of course, here at King of Kings we still have big plans for the **Community Hub**. There have been many meetings happening behind the scenes working out how this is all going to work and look - and I can't wait to reveal more of that to you early in 2023. Step one, is to end this year well!

So - All of this that I have just mentioned, is driven by a conviction that God has a vision for his church to be a growing family. Amen.

Let's look at the next part of what John says from verse 3;

### **1 John 3:3**

**All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. <sup>4</sup> Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. <sup>6</sup> No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.**

**<sup>7</sup> Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup> The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.**

**<sup>9</sup> No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. <sup>10</sup> This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.**

If the first part of God's vision for his church, is a vision of church family, the next thing John wants us to know, is that God has;

### **A vision of Christlike purity**

As part of God's family, we are to grow to become more like Jesus. Just the same way that we tend to grow to become more alike or similar to the people we are close to - so God has a vision of his children becoming more like his Son.

In theology we call the process of growing in your faith and becoming more like Jesus, sanctification. It is not something that happens overnight - it is a process of gradually learning to think, act and react the way that Jesus does, and we can only do this with the help of the Holy Spirit. If we are part of God's family, we are not meant to stay the same, we are meant to be growing and becoming more like Jesus.

So it is important that you know, that God has a vision not only for his church, but he also has a vision for your life. He had a very clear vision in sending his Son to die for you. And his vision for you is that, one day, you will become like Jesus, and see Jesus as he is. He has a vision of his church being a radiant, pure and spotless bride.

Our overarching vision for our lives should be to become as much like Jesus as possible. Is the glistening purity of Jesus' life, a model for your own life?

Now, how does this fit into our ongoing struggle with sin?

We can get ourselves into a real muddle with John's verses here if we just give them a quick read over:

**No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning.**

Is John saying that if you are a believer, that you cannot sin, and therefore, if you do sin, you are not a believer? I don't think so.

As believers we are to become like Jesus, but I don't think that any of us are really close to be fully like Him yet! I certainly know I don't feel that I am anywhere close to being perfect and sin free!

So, what can he mean? Well, there have been several ways that people have dealt with these verses. Some say;

Well, it is literally true – a genuine believer cannot sin. However, this contradicts the rest of scripture which indicates that believers can and do still sin.

Some think it only refers to very crude and blatant sin – like the deadly sins of murder, lust and all the really 'bad sins.' But that kind of thinking that tries to rank sins, is not a good idea. Because even though I might sin differently to you, our sin stinks just the same to God!

Others say, well, if believers do something wrong, God does not call it sin. It's something else for a believer. But that would mean God has double standards. So I don't believe that at all.

Others try and explain it by saying that the verse is pointing to the ideal that we are aiming for, without ever believing it as possible. It is what we are to desire, but we cannot achieve it.

Finally, there are some which say the verse only refers to ongoing, habitual, persistent sin.

What do you think? It's interesting. I will tell you what I believe. I think that John is dealing with people who call themselves disciples of Jesus, but continue to sin, and just accept it, almost as if it does not matter. That makes the most sense to me. I don't think it's a once off action, but an ongoing action. David Pawson puts it like this;

*“So whoever is born of God ‘does not continue to sin’ – they cannot go on sinning, because if they’re living in Christ they will make progress and will have victory. It’s the relationship with Christ that determines the truth of this promise. The whole letter of John assumes that Christians will fall into sin – there will be no one perfect this side of heaven – but not that they will go on sinning.” (D Pawson)*

So I hope that helps you make sense of what has been a tough verse for many believers.

For me, I know before I came to know Christ. I used to be a full time sinner, and once in a while, I might have ‘accidentally’ done something right. But now that I have spent a few years developing a personal relationship with God, I still make mistakes, but not nearly as much as I once did. I am not where I need to be, but thank God, I am not where I used to be.

So, your vision, should be to stay close to Jesus. As the message translation puts it;

**“Stay with Christ. Live deeply in Christ... with no cause for red-faced guilt or lame excuses when he arrives.” (2:28, MSG)**

Brothers and sisters, this should be your primary vision for your life. It is possible to focus on specific things that we, usually rightly believe that God has called us to do, and yet neglect this overarching vision for our lives.

God is much more concerned about how you live your life than about what you achieve. Our individual callings are good and important - but our primary vision for life should always be to draw nearer to Jesus.

Deliberately continuing to sin is warned about in other places in the Bible:

### **Hebrew 10:26**

**If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, <sup>27</sup> but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.**

One of the proofs that you are a Christian is that when you sin you hate it. You don’t love sin and want to be rid of it. Those who go on living in Christ cannot go on sinning. It is incompatible with the new life within. The Apostle Paul described this tension that I think many of us feel in the letter to the Romans:

### **Romans 7:18**

**For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on**

**doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. <sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.**

If we are honest with ourselves, as believers, we still struggle with sin – if you are struggling with sin though, I would say it is a positive sign – it is when we stop struggling, and start to embrace it, and don't care about that, that John says we are in danger.

So, what should you do when you struggle with an ongoing sin or temptation? I would encourage you to

**Seek the power of the Holy Spirit**

**Stay away from tempting situations**

**Seek the help of the body of Christ – be open to their willingness to hold you accountable and pray for you.**

Father, would you help us to grow in Christlike purity. We know you have a vision to grow us, to shape us to be more like your son - help us we pray.

Lets look at the next passage.

John writes in **1 John 3:11;**

**For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup> Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.**

**<sup>13</sup> Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.**

**<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.**

We've looked at Gods vision of church family, God's vision of Christlike purity, finally; God's vision of practical love. God has

**A vision of practical love**



Again and again in John's letter we come back to this theme of loving one another – there is no escaping it! Right? That's why we called this series summer of love!

And the age old lesson is relevant - If God repeats something so many times, we need to sit up and pay attention! Are you paying attention church?

In this passage, Grandpa John takes us back to a old story which looks at the behaviour of Cain and Abel, and suggests we should learn from them. I'm sure you remember the story, when the two brothers presented their sacrifices to God - Cain became jealous because Abel's offering was more acceptable, and he ended up killing his brother.

It is a really sad story about the comparison trap – when we look at what others are doing, or have, or seem to be doing better than us, and we get jealous, we are on dangerous ground.

Cain is the opposite of Jesus. Cain is contrasted with Jesus, who humbled Himself. Are you more like Cain or more like Jesus?

God's vision for us to to be more like Jesus. Cain gave in to hate. Jesus walked the way of love. I like how John gets practical here though, with the love we are to have – it is not just a warm fuzzy feeling, but a real practical sacrificial love – a love that gives and acts, not just talks!

I will give you an example, this week, someone in our church paid R5 000 into the church account, which is something they do every single year, in order to bless some families in need with a Christmas hamper. Pastor Ian & Rosh came up with a plan, and this week, Rosh braved Pick & Pay Longbeach Mall, on Black Friday, and bought one of the biggest piles of groceries I have ever seen! As a result - a bunch of needy people in our church will be getting a big Christmas hamper from King of Kings. But its only possible because of one man, sitting in this congregation, who has a desire to love, not just with words, but with actions.

That is God's vision for his church. A vision of practical love.

As I close, I want to read the final few verses of chapter 3:19; John writes;

### **1 John 3:19**

**This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: <sup>20</sup> If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup> Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God <sup>22</sup> and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.**

**<sup>23</sup> And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. <sup>24</sup> The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.**

There is so much I could say about this. A vision of belonging. A vision of Godly rest in his presence. A vision of the greatness of God. A vision to reach others to believe in the name of Jesus. A vision of the Spirit that he has placed within us. But I need to close! Somehow.

I want you to know today that you can approach God with confidence. That there is a blessed assurance that God gives to those who belong to his family.

Knowing that we can approach God knowing that He loves us, that our sins are forgiven, thanks to Jesus, and that God wants His best for us.

### **Conclusion**

So – King of Kings – Do you know that God has a vision for our church? He has a vision of a church family for us. How are you doing with your family resemblance to Jesus?

So - Child of God - Do you know that God has a vision for your life? He has a vision of Christlike purity for you. How are you doing with your struggle against sin?

And if you call yourself a Christ follower - then he wants you to know that he has a vision for us to love practically. Not just with words, but with action and truth. How are you doing in terms of loving others?

You see friends, vision without action is just a dream. I don't just want to be a dreamer. I want to be a doer. I don't want to have a man-made vision of pointless achievements, but I want to have a God-breathed vision for our church and for our lives.

Amen.

### **Prayer**

Lord, thank you for your amazing vision for me - that one day I will be like Jesus, and I will see him as he is.