***Series Overview and Samples***

**Reach the City provides a sermon series entitled, *A Life that Wins.* This series is a journey through the stories of six Biblical characters who exemplify one of six major qualities of a winning life. These qualities are decisiveness, personal drive, Biblical direction, dependency, the willingness to dream, and spiritual discipline. The goal of the sermon series and the 40 day devotional book, also entitled *A Life that Wins*, is to help believers embrace the abundant life Jesus describes in John 10:10. Also included with the series are six professionally created testimony videos that provide a candid look into the lives of six individuals striving to embrace the principle being studied each week. The goal of a *A Life that Wins* is to help believers fulfill the first aspect of the 1,2,3 challenge which making 1 life changing decision. Our ultimate desire is to equip believers to live an *intentional* life that becomes an *influential* one to the unchurched around them.**

***Sample Sermons***

**Week 2-Victory in the Valley**

**(Personal Drive)**

**1 Samuel 17:17-58**

***(Samples includes introduction and first point to Sermon only)***

Welcome to week 2 of *Reach the City*! Just as a reminder — we are in the middle of a 40-day spiritual growth campaign where we are asking every believer to take the 1-2-3 Challenge: make one life changing decision, have two spiritual discussions with an unchurched person, and commit to three days of corporate outreach. It is certainly not too late to sign up! You can inform me or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and we will help you get started today!

Also, don’t forget about small groups. If you are not in one already, please see \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or sign up at the *RTC* table in the foyer today. Finally, don’t forget to sign on and post testimonies and stories of your journey on the *Reach the City* website! www.reachthecity.com

The goal of this series is to help all of us become more intentional in living a Christian life. Remember, a winning life will win others! When we become more intentional, we will also become more influential in the lives of those who do not know Christ.

A very effective way to become intentional in our lives is to make a hinge decision in one of the five key areas that we spoke about last week: faith, finances, freedom, fitness, and family. Remember, our desire is to put in place small decisions that can open huge doors of life change for us. Last week many of us determined what their hinge decision would be. Don’t be left out — determine what area of life change you are going to strive for during this 40-day campaign and then make one or two hinge decisions.

In our sermon series, we are looking into the story of a winning life from the Bible and drawing out the life principle contained in that story. These Biblical principles will help you to live a winning life and to maintain your hinge decision for the rest of your life. Last week we talked about the first principle, decisiveness, found in 1 Samuel 14, in the life of Jonathan and his young armor bearer. This week we are going to talk about principle 2, personal drive. Personal drive is best illustrated by the story of David and Goliath. Let’s turn to 1 Samuel 17 and read the story together.

**[Read Scripture.] 1 Samuel 17:17-58**

In our text, the Bible says David faced a huge giant, ran to the battle line to face him, and then cut off his head! David was driven to win!

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

The writer of Hebrews tells us to run with perseverance. The Amplified Bible defines perseverance as patient endurance or steady and active persistence. This is what personal drive is all about — running life’s race with perseverance, with steady and active persistence of a goal and not allowing anything or anyone stop you.

I’d like for you to watch a testimony video about a young man determined to not allow anything to hinder him from achieving his goals. Chris is a legally blind diabetic who is also an avid runner. At the filming of this video, Chris had just finished a race called the Dopey Challenge down at Disney World where he completed a 5k, 10k, half marathon, and full marathon in back to back days. 48.6 miles of running in four days!

(Pastor, show the Christ Lancaster testimony video)

I hope you caught a powerful statement Chris made in his testimony. “I must not focus on the things I *can’t do,* I must focus on the things *I can do.”* That is a very true statement made by an individual driven not to allow anything hinder his dreams. This is the kind of drive you and I must have and is certainly the kind of drive David had when confronting Goliath. Though the odds were stacked against him, he continued to run to the battle line to meet the giant.

The question you have to answer is this: What will drive you to overcome the giants you will face when trying to fulfill your one life changing decision? What will cause you to run and not give up? What will causes you to strip off every weight and make sure nothing blocks your desired goal?

From the story of David and Goliath, we learn five things that should drive us to carry out our hinge decision.

* The “why” should drive us to fulfill our hinge decision
* The “who” should drive us to fulfill our hinge decision
* The “what” should drive us to fulfill our hinge decision
* The “how” should drive us to fulfill our hinge decision
* The “where” should drive us to fulfill our hinge decision

1. **The “why” should drive us to fulfill our hinge decision.**

In his popular book on leadership entitled *Start with Why*, author Simon Sinek writes that when it comes to change, we must always start with “why?” In other words, if you and I wish to fulfill any decision, we must have a deep comprehension of the reasons we need change in the first place. This “why” will strengthen us when times get tough. This “why” will serve as a reminder to keep moving forward when we feel like old habits are trying to pull us in reverse. And this “why” will ultimately serve as the key reason we will remain committed to our hinge decision — no matter what curve balls life will throw at us along the way. We must have a “why.”

Last week I dreamed with you a little bit about vision and what life could look like on the other side of the door. That touches on this first point of “why” but let’s take that a bit deeper for just a minute by looking at why David desired to fight Goliath in the first place.

The Bible says that Goliath was mocking God’s people and making sport of the God of Israel. When David heard Goliath proclaiming his usual defiance and blaspheming God and His people, something rose up within David and he became convinced that something had to change. Actually, it wasn’t some kind of knee-jerk reaction that rose up in David — it was more of a deep conviction that settled in him. He set out to destroy Goliath because deep down David wanted to restore a sense of self-respect within God’s people while ensuring that God’s name was also held in high esteem and honor. This was David’s “why” and it ran deep within him.

Our “why” must also run deep within our hearts when it comes to change. Our “why” simply cannot consist of external motivating factors. We will talk about those in just a moment because they are important. However, external factors that motivate us are usually not enough to sustain change in our lives during difficult times. For example, the desire for a raise that comes from hard work and promotions is one thing. However, the desire to work hard because you desire to fulfill your God-given potential in life is a little deeper and a little more sustaining. The desire to simply look different and to fit into a new outfit is one thing, but the desire to become a better steward of your body so that you can fully enjoy life is another thing. Our “why” is driven by an interior motive that is rooted in the deeper principles of God’s Word.

Let me show you a video about a young man named Chris. He is an avid runner who has made a decision to not allow anything to stop him from running-even blindness!

Video: Chris Lancaster Testimony

I don’t know about you but I am inspired by that testimony. Here is a guy who loves to run but has chosen to not allow anything to stop him-including being legally blind and diabetic.

One of the best “why’s” we can all adopt has to do with our children and grandchildren. For example, getting our finances into shape because we desire to buy big purchases such as TVs and cars with cash is a noble goal. We should all try to avoid debt as much as possible. But to get our finances into shape because we want to model healthy financial responsibility to our children is a goal that runs much deeper. When we understand that perhaps the financial legacy of our children and grandchildren might be at stake, we will be even more likely to see our spending habits improved. The same can be said of our freedom. I might want to see change in my temper so that I do not live angry and that alone is a worthwhile goal. However, to see improvement in my life so that my strengths are passed on to my kids and not my weaknesses is a bit more motivating in the long run.

David had an ultimate “why,” and you and I should have one too, as we set out to fulfill our hinge decision.

***(Sample includes introduction and first point to Sermon only)***

**Week 3-This Time**

**(Biblical Direction)**

**Genesis 29:31-35**

Welcome to week 3 of *Reach the City*! We are in the middle of our 40 days of outreach, a campaign that is fueled by the 1-2-3 Challenge! You made a hinge decision and settled into a small group. You’ve also identify one unchurched person you have committed to have two discussions with. Remember, the challenge is that you will share Christ with your life by inviting your friend to a Matthew Party and then invite them to church. Of course, they can come any Sunday, but our friend day is scheduled on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Lastly, we have all taken the challenge to end these 40 days with three days of outreach scheduled on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Today, we continue our sermon series entitled *A Life that Wins*. This series follows the book many of you are reading with the same title and serves as a tour guide in fulfilling your one hinge decision. The book and this sermon series are keeping our entire church (including youth and children) centered on two main truths:

*A life that wins will win others!* The goal is not just self-help as we have heard about for years. The goal is to teach believers that a person living a Biblical life will not only experience victory in daily living, but by doing so will become the salt and light of the earth.

*An intentional life is an influential life.* Through this journey together, including reading the book, listening to the sermon series, and engaging in small groups, we are striving to become more intentional in how we live. The goal is not to gain “more stuff” for ourselves but to have a greater impact for Christ.

Each week we are talking about a different destination that will serve as a mile marker to strive for on this journey toward a life that wins. The first destination, or mile marker, we talked about was decisiveness in the life of Jonathan and his young armor bearer in 1 Samuel 14. The second destination concerned personal drive from the life of David as he defeated Goliath. This week we are talking about direction and living life at our highest level. To summarize:

* Week 1: My decisiveness.
* Week 2: My drive.
* Week 3: My direction.

You’ve probably said or heard others say, “I want to go to the ‘next level.’” Or maybe you have even described the activity of the Holy Spirit in your life as trying to take you to the “next level.” I think we would agree that the very expression describes the direction of next level living as “up!”

For years, so many athletes tried and failed to run a mile in less than four minutes that people made it out to be a physical impossibility. The world record for a mile was 4 minutes and 1.3 seconds, set by Gunder Hagg of Sweden in 1945.

Roger Bannister, a medical student, born in Harrow, England, in 1929, was a top mile-runner while a student at the University of Oxford and at St. Mary’s Hospital Medical School in London. On May 6, 1954, he came to the Iffley Road track in Oxford for the annual match between the Amateur Athletic Association and Oxford University. Conditions were far from ideal; it had been windy and raining. A considerable crosswind was blowing across the track as the mile race was set to begin.

At 6:00 p.m., the starting gun was fired. In a carefully planned race, Bannister was aided by Chris Brasher, a former Cambridge runner who acted as a pacemaker. Bannister took the lead with about 350 yards to go and passed an unofficial timekeeper at the 1,500-meter mark in 3 minutes 43 seconds, thus equaling the world’s record for that distance. Thereafter, Bannister threw in all his reserves and broke the tape in 3 minutes 59.4 seconds. As soon as the first part of his score was announced (“three minutes…”), the crowd erupted in pandemonium.

His world record in the mile did not stand long, and the record time continued to be lowered. A “sub-four” is still a notable time, but top international runners now routinely accomplish the feat (adapted from www.history.com/this-day-in-history/first-four-minute-mile).

Bannister achieved a milestone that lifted the bar for the running world. He set a new standard to achieve for a runner to be classified as a top world-class competitor. God wants to do the same thing in our lives. He desires to raise the bar, set new standards, and help us achieve higher heights. David said it this way in Psalm 40:1-3, “I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.” David declares God took him from where he was and elevated him to a firm and steady place that was “higher,” a place of secured victory and steadfastness. He would also say in Psalm 18:33, “He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the *heights*.” Paul would say in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” Paul says that we are changed from glory to glory, from one level to the next, never to return to the old!

The question is how? How do we reach new places in our walk with God? How do we obtain the next level? How do we move up?

Perhaps no life answers these questions better than the life of Leah in Genesis 29. Leah is one of those easily overlooked individuals of the Bible. Yet the fact she *is* so easily overlooked could be the reason she is the one who models “higher level living” and what it takes to get there the best. Let’s read her story and I will explain.

**[Read Genesis 29:31-35]**

The account of Leah in this passage starts off with “When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved…” In fact, if you remember, her story revolves around Jacob, at least in the beginning. Jacob feared for his life because he had deceived his brother Esau out of his birthright and blessing. Jacob fled for his life and ended up working with his uncle Laban.

In the course of time, Jacob fell in love with Leah’s beautiful younger sister Rachel. Genesis 29:16 describes the two women in candid terms. “Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.” Jacob was so in love with Rachel that he worked seven years to earn her hand in marriage. After completing the time required for Rachel’s hand, the time came for the consummation of their long engagement. Laban then deceived Jacob and gave him Leah instead. (This is sounding like a soap opera, isn’t it?) They have their first night together and verse 25 says, “When morning came, there was Leah.”

Can you imagine the disappointment in Jacob’s eyes? Can you imagine what it must have felt like for Leah? She most certainly lived in the shadows of her attractive and sought after younger sister. After all, the Bible says Rachel was beautiful and lovely in form while Leah had weak eyes (the Hebrew meaning for weak eyes is not known) and could have meant “homely.”

We can all live in shadows or “blind spots.” A blind spot is the place in the side mirror of your car that, if you are not careful, will cause objects to be hidden and only discovered with a crash when you try to change lanes.

Our lives can have blind spots too? There can be attitudes, habits, perceptions, or besetting sins that are hidden and not easily seen, but be assured, they are most definitely there. Blind spots take various forms:

* Unresolved emotional baggage can be a big blind spot. Fear, for example, is a common one.
* Unaddressed sin can serve as a blind spot. It is a sin that is a secret, but eventually it comes to light.
* Regret is another huge blind spot.
* Insecurities are also a big blind spot.

Here is the catch with our blind spots. They have one of two profound impacts on our life.

* First, just like driving a car, we can usually “manage” to drive along the road of life without having to deal with blind spots until we try to change lanes and advance forward. Time and time again, I’ve seen believers who “crash” when they step out and try to move forward in life and their walk with God because of blind spots that have not been resolved. Unfinished issues can finish our efforts to excel quickly unless they are dealt with.
* Or secondly, unfinished issues can cause us to play it safe because we know the blind spot exists yet we are unwilling or not taught how to deal with it. The result is frustration and living life in the slow lane! It’s like a driver who cannot pass the car ahead because they know something is in their blind spot. The car ahead is not going anywhere and neither is the car in the blind spot. The result is a feeling of being stuck and slow moving. I hate that feeling when I’m driving a car and I hate that feeling when I’m trying to live life to the fullest with God but just can’t seem to advance and make any real progress!

This certainly could have been the case for Leah. Consider the shadows she lived in and her blind spots:

* She probably compared herself to Rachel her entire life.
* She is an afterthought to her own father.
* She is a source of disappointment to Jacob. She has to deal with the heart-crushing blow of a disappointed husband on the morning after their first night together!

Then comes the verse that everyone knew was true, Genesis 29:31 — Leah was not loved by Jacob. Even Proverbs 30:21 says, “Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up.” And guess what, an unloved woman is one of them!

Talk about blind spots. Talk about shadows. Talk about a life-defining emotional impairment. But this is not how the story ends. Why? Because of her hinge decision!

Genesis 29:31-35 shows how Leah urgently deals with her situation, essentially trying to earn her husband’s affections by having children. In the days of the Old Testament, having a son meant giving birth to honor and a family name worth remembering. She had her first son, Reuben, and she says in verse 32, “Surely my husband will love me now.” You can almost hear the desperation in her statement but her fleeting hope would not prevail.

And then she has another son, and another, and still another, and Leah gets fed up with trying to “earn” the love and approval of her husband. She then makes a landmark decision in verse 35, “This time, I will praise the Lord.”

No longer was Leah going to glean her sense of self-esteem from a husband who would never validate her. *This time* was going to be different. *This time* would start a whole new chapter for her life. *This time* the shadow would fade instead of her sense of self-worth. *This time* she would redirect her desires toward the Lord, and her *“this time”* decision would shape her destiny forever.

The truth is, getting to a “this time” kind of decision that actually sticks and shapes your life forever will rarely come as a result of a sprint. More likely, it will be the result of a process. For many of us, including myself, we are works in progress. Or maybe I should say, God’s progress is at work in my life and it takes time for the change to become permanent.

This is what took place in Leah as she gave birth to each son. She moved closer and to closer to a lasting difference in her life. Amazingly, the meaning behind each of her son’s names signified a different level of growth. Each name served as a rung on a ladder to a higher level of living for Leah, and can serve as the same for you. The first name was Reuben.