



Hope For Everyone | They're Still Work It

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Well, Good Morning, Menlo Church. Would you join me in celebrating what God is doing all around the Bay Area? I'm so honored to be a part of a church that when we say hope is for everyone, we mean everyone. We don't just mean like our "ones". We mean everybody. We mean that there's the kingdom of heaven rapidly expanding all around the Bay Area and your generosity and involvement help make that happen.

So, welcome to our second annual Hope for Everyone Giving Weekend. This is kind of a unique weekend. So, if you're new or newer, we are in a three-year initiative that today kind of marks the

start of the second year. That's about the call that we believe God's placed on us as a church to be about reaching the next three percent, 250,000 people in the Bay Area, with the good news of Jesus through a healthy Menlo Church, planting networks, and being for the Bay and beyond.

And so, we're really, really glad that you're here. If you're new, please know there's no pressure today. Like, you're welcome. You don't need to do anything. And we hope that God actually gives you something in your spirit today that you really needed. But for our church, after a couple of years where our elders, our staff, our leaders prayed, listened, and discerned about what God was calling us to, we've been taking those steps in recent days across all of our campuses in Menlo Park, San Mateo, Saratoga, Mountain View, and online.

And we're going to continue to do that today. Actually, today we're sort of leaning in because before we get to the scriptures, I want to give you a picture of the future that we believe God is preparing us

for. Not because buildings or projects are the point, but because they are tools that God often uses to reach people that he loves.

Before I show you some of what's ahead, let me pray for us. And I'd say, let's just pray that we would continue to hear the voice of God and feel the heart of God for people that matter to God all through the communities that we have a chance to serve. And that we would have the faith. Jesus says that if we would have the faith of a mustard seed, he can move mountains. And we're already seeing God do some things in the Bay Area that no one has ever seen before in history. And so, let's pray that maybe our faith, God would grow it, that we could be even more involved. Would you pray with me?

God, thank you so much that when we talk about the church, it's a capital C. It's what you're doing in lots of different places in church plants and established churches and parachurch ministries. And thank you that we get to be a part of that. Thanks that we've been a part of that as a church for more than 150 years. Would you help us, God, to believe that the best days are ahead, that your mission

continues to expand and you call us to be a part of it. God, thanks for this time that we have now. Would you use it to help shape us even more into who you've created us to be in Jesus name. Amen.

Now, we discussed hope for everyone last week. I showed you how God is already using Menlo to help grow a network of churches all around the Bay Area, committed to this heartbeat. We just added a couple dozen more this week actually to actually help us plant churches all throughout California, especially in the Bay Area and to practically show up and be for the Bay and beyond through partnerships like the ones that you just heard about. It's really amazing.

Today, I want to show you some of the investments that we're going to make to prepare Menlo to be a warm and welcoming place at all of our campuses, just as people have done before you and I arrived on the scene.

Now, I do want to say if you're in San Mateo or Mountain View today, those are buildings that we lease and they're short-term leases. And so, we're waiting. You're going to see some snapshots of the future that when we have permanent spaces at those campuses, these will be the design models for how we'll put them there. But in case you don't know that, that's just kind of a tension that we feel at those campuses where we're actively looking to secure permanent or long-term homes for both of those campuses.

And some of you are like right now, "Oh Phil, like how are we doing in that search? What's your approach?" Oh man, so glad that you asked. I don't even know how I would respond. Oh, look at that. I prepared a slide. This is sort of our hope that we have as a little bit of a priority list about the way we're thinking about those campuses.

- Our first priority would be to acquire an existing church. The reason for that is the land is already zoned. And so we're able to do a lot more, a lot more quickly in those places. And so we're aiming at those in both of those communities.

- The second would be to purchase commercial property. That one is a little unique because when you go to communities in Northern California and say, "Can I have that piece of land and not pay you property tax?" They don't love it, but that's an option.
- Third would be to have a long-term lease that we could have something for ten, twenty years, for decades to make the investments in it that make sense.
- And then lastly would be to continue in our current rental locations likely at a higher rate.

So if you're wondering, like how are we thinking about that? What do those decisions look like? I just wanted to give you a sense of that.

We have a team of volunteers and staff that are actively reviewing and pursuing leads for potential locations for both of those campuses.

And we're praying for God to open the right door at the right time.

And I would ask whether those are your campuses or not, as a part of your church, would you pray that God would make those opportunities clear and that we would walk into them faithfully?

Now, as we have more actionable information or you want to learn more about it, you can go to menlo.church/hope and see those updates along the way.

Now, I want to share with you some of the renderings about design work that's going to happen in the locations we do currently own in Menlo Park and Saratoga and the designs that we will bring to Mountain View and San Mateo. But before I do that, I want to clarify something. We don't need these. If all we're trying to do is what we currently do, the current way that we're doing it for the people that make Menlo Menlo today, we don't need any of this.

But the thing is, like we aren't just doing this because it's good stewardship. We aren't just doing this because it'll make things look nicer. We're doing this because we're on a mission. We're doing this because a long line of people over the course of centuries, actually millennia, have been investing. And that's why we're here today.

And not just the people you're thinking about. Not just the people that fit the categories you assume. Jesus says that, "I've come that you might have life and have it to the full." That's not just a message for the lost. That's a message for the found. That's that all of us would walk closer with Jesus and experience the life that he died to provide.

At the heart of this is about creating environments that are irresistible to people, allowing them to find faith and to prioritize the faith of the next generation.

And so, if you're wondering what might that look like, what are some ways that we're going to do that? Some of that is about us prioritizing some of the spaces for kids. And so this first picture is a little bit of what our kids' classrooms, especially younger kids' classrooms, will look across Menlo with dedicated spaces and designs that communicate that hope really is for them built for the future.

This is what a kids lobby will likely look like here right at Menlo Park for families and kids to connect. And then all these spaces will age up and get a little warmer in design as students as kids become students. That's what our student space will likely look like.

To give you a sense of the direction, really the kind of design theme that we have in mind that we're working right now to get things ready to submit for permits to start doing this work.

Now at Menlo Park that means that we're going to also make some pretty major changes to where stuff is. If you are part of our Menlo Park campus you know that right outside of our sanctuary that's actually where all of our offices are right now right along Santa Cruz. We're going to move our offices to a different part of campus so that we can prioritize space for kids. So, we're going to make all those kids environments as well as great areas for welcoming people. And we're also going to put appropriately sized, appropriately built, appropriately located bathrooms right across the way there.

Some of you are like, "I didn't even know that Menlo Park had bathrooms." Welcome to the problem. And if you're a part of Mountain View, I just want you to know I see you. I want you to have great bathrooms, too. They have even worse. So, we see all those problems.

And as far as welcoming environments, let me show you what we have in mind as an idea that's going to inform every campus, to endear ourselves to the community around us. And what we're going to aim at is first here in Menlo Park, we're going to change the look and feel of our main entryway outside the sanctuary to have a bunch more green space, to have a cafe that's open throughout the week so that people have a chance to interact and connect even that don't go to our church, endearing ourselves to the community, as well as a safe space for kids to have a little climbing area, a welcoming front door for our community to experience the life of our church and the hope of Jesus all the time.

And so, like I'm I know I'm showing you big pictures, but it's like on a camera and you may or may not be able to see it. If you want to see these more closely, you can go to menlo.church/hope. And the updates along the way will be there as well.

Everything that I just showed you matters, but it doesn't probably matter for just the reasons you think. See, we're not doing any of this because we need nicer things. We're doing this because we believe that God is preparing us to be prepared for the people that aren't here yet. That's all the reasons that we would do this stuff. People who are going to discover Jesus in these rooms, in these courtyards, in these kids spaces, in these communities, and for us to feel the weight of that.

Jesus, he gives us a picture of that. Actually, a picture of a father who refuses to waste the waiting. A father who keeps the house ready. A father who refuses to give up. A father who watches the road every day with hope in his eyes because someone that he loves is worth it. Still worth it. This is the heart behind Hope for Everyone.

So, we're going to return back to the story that started all of it. Last year, we looked at a couple of different parables in Luke chapter 15, the lost sheep and the lost sons. This year, I want us to return back to the prodigal son's story, but with a fresh angle because Jesus never told stories, assuming we would never hear them again. He told them that we would be able to think about them in different angles and in different ways.

If you're unfamiliar, this is a story about two sons who were both lost in different ways. The younger son was lost outside the house and the older son was lost inside the house. One was lost in rebellion. The other was lost in religion. One ran from the father. The other resented the father. But Jesus' point is not just that the lost can come home. It's that the found can come alive. That all of us need the good news and the work of Jesus in our life.

The younger son discovers that he can come home. He's starving. He's humiliated. He's rehearsing his apology. But the father still runs to him in love. The older son discovers that he can live in the father's

house and still be far from the father's heart. But the father still comes out to him and offers him grace also. Both sons needed restoration. Both sons needed their father. Both needed a home to return to. Both needed a community that would celebrate when they returned. And that is the heart of what we are doing. See, when hope is for everyone, the lost come home and the found come alive. So whether you would call yourself a Christian or not, we all need the hope of heaven found in the person of Jesus.

So let's remind ourselves of that story that we began this journey with last year. Remember there were two sons and one of them basically tells his dad, "Dad, I want my inheritance right now." which at the time culturally meant, "Dad, I'm going to pretend for the rest of my life that you're already dead." Which is, you know, hopefully he didn't do it on Father's Day.

And as he's telling this story, Jesus continues the parable this way. It says, "Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country. And there he squandered his

property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything he had, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him in the fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate. And no one gave him anything." (Luke 15:13-16)

Now, this wasn't overnight. This took some time, but he had spent all that he had living the way that he thought would make him happy. And not only did it not work, but eventually a famine came. Eventually, a downturn took place. And for a young Jewish man to consider eating pig slop, things had gone from bad to worse. And he remembered that his dad treated his servants better than he was currently living. And so he rehearsed an apology and he prepared to head home no longer as a son, but that he would beg to be a servant. That's the moment that many of us remember in this story.

But something happened. His father hadn't forgotten about him, hadn't given up on him. He wasn't a lost cause. How does that

happen? Well, it happens because the father was kind of making sure that during this long and painful season of waiting, he wasn't wasting it. One of the most overlooked parts of this story is what the father does in the waiting.

See, waiting for him is not wasted time. And it shouldn't be for you and me. Waiting is formation. Waiting is preparation. Waiting is love stretched out over time. Sometimes the waiting that we are extending to others that we love, sometimes it feels like the amount of time that God is asking us to wait requires us to lean on God in even bigger ways because of it. Right? That we have to trust him.

What the father does in the waiting mirrors what we are doing in this season here at Menlo. First I want to show you that first. The father kept looking down the road. Every day he probably walked around the edge of the property and he looked at the same dusty horizon at the end of the path hoping to see his son. Imagine the heartache of his hope day after day, week after week, month after month. There are no updates, no tracking numbers, no ETA, no Uber screen with the

vehicle approaching, no idea. And yet, he kept looking. That's what hope does. Hope trains us to keep our eyes on the road and continue to hold out hope that God isn't done yet.

Every time you pray for people who haven't come home yet, you are looking down the road just like the father did. You are holding out hope and with it that's changing you. It's guarding your heart from the syndrome of the older brother of resentment and resistance and frustration. You are remembering and reminding yourself that when hope is for everyone, the lost come home and the found come alive including you. We need the mission to continue to change and shape us.

The second thing that we see in the story is the father kept the light on. Metaphorically at least at this time some families in the region they would light a lamp near the entrance of their property as a way of welcoming strangers and letting people know where they were. Who knows? Maybe every sunset the father instructed someone or or maybe he made the journey himself to go light the lamp again as a

small faithful and a hopeful act to say to his son. If you ever decide to come home and you make it back at night, you don't have to stumble in the dark anymore.

See, this is a part of what we're doing as we create spaces where the lamp can stay on. Welcoming lobbies, safe kids environments, intentional hospitality. These are signals to our community, even people who don't come to church, even people who are not followers of Jesus to know that they are welcome here.

Years ago, there was an ad campaign. Let me see if you remember it. It was about a motel and it was a very famous ad campaign and it went like this. "I'm Tom Bodett and I'll.... (audience says "leave the light on")... that impression was pretty spot on, right? Yeah. Actually that's my normal accent. I speak like this on purpose for you. "I'll leave the light on for you." That heartbeat to always make room for the stranger. He got that idea from the heart of Jesus who is always welcoming the hopeless home. He never stops. He never gives up. We see it with the father, too.

The third thing that we see is the father kept the calf ready. Now, this one, if you're not a church person, if you're not in this text, very often might seem extra strange, and it's easy if you are to breeze past it. But don't let your familiarity with the story or the weirdness blind you to the amazing picture of prepared kindness that we see in the person of the father in this story.

Just as the son was breaking into his rehearsed apology, the father interrupts him. He doesn't even let him continue to keep going. He's run the father's run down the path that he's been looking down day after day after day. And he hugs and puts his arms around his smelly pig slop soaked son. And Jesus, as he describes this moment, uses these words. He says, "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to celebrate." (Luke 15:22-24)

I mean, what an amazing snapshot. What an incredible picture. His father isn't welcoming a new servant for the first time. He's welcoming his son home for the first time in a long time. He's giving him possessions that communicate that he is a son. It's status. It's not just a servant. And then he takes the calf, which would have been prepared for holidays and celebrations, and has the calf killed to celebrate.

Now, at this time, and in this culture, they didn't even eat meat every day. So, not just having meat, but having the fattened calf. This was a big big deal. Think about this. This was not a casual preparation. He didn't send somebody out to grab leftovers. He didn't look for takeout. They had been preparing for this eventual feast. A calf like this in a culture like this had been pre-selected and it experienced up to a year of intentional preparation for a moment just like this.

A fattened calf wasn't something you grabbed the night that your son walked back up the driveway. It took six months of feeding, protecting, and preparing. Which means, listen to this. The father

didn't start preparing when his son returned. He started preparing while his son was still gone. The father was preparing for his son's return while his son was still a long way off. While the son was wasting his inheritance, the father was feeding the calf. While the son was losing everything, the father was investing in the upcoming celebration of his return.

In other words, the father turned waiting into preparing. Hope shaped every small faithful choice he made. And we live in a culture that needs followers of Jesus to let hope shape the decisions we are making. That's our invitation. We don't know exactly when people will come home to God.

We don't know exactly what the breakthrough is that's going to provide people a viewpoint to think, you know what, God's worth my time. I need to reconsider what it would look like to align my life and my eternity with him. But we can prepare now. We can pray now. We can give now. We can build now because when hope is for everyone, the lost really do come home and the found really do come alive.

There's something in it for all of us. That's why we're preparing rooms for kids that we haven't met yet. Spaces for students who aren't here yet. Campus upgrades for people who will walk in in six months, in a year, in five years. Think about this. People were doing this 150 years ago at Menlo. That's why we're here. This is us getting ready for the people coming down our road.

And lastly, the father kept loving both sons. He loved the son who ran and he loved the son who stayed physically but drifted emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. His heart had room for the rebellious and the resentful. And that's such good news for us.

Remember the story? There's a party going on at the house and the older brother, he wouldn't even go in. The same loving father desperately wanted his boys to be together. And so in this moment, he goes out to his older son who's in the field frustrated. And he says this, says, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." (Luke 15:31)

Which just as a side note, this is a legal statement. When the younger brother said, "Give me my inheritance." What that meant is everything that the dad had left was going to go to the older son. And I'm wondering if when the father says this in the parable, the older son's like, "Yeah, that's why I'm annoyed that you're using my stuff to fund that party for my useless younger brother." He's on the outside looking in.

But the father says, "It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found." (Luke 15:32) What a contrast.

See, the older brother mirrors the attitude of the religious leaders who Jesus is talking to and sharing these stories with. And if we're honest, if you've been in church for a while, most of us drift to and have a lot of older brother energy, don't we? We're wondering, is the younger brother in my life, in my neighborhood, at my job, at my school, worth the kind of investment that we're talking about? Phil, do you know

what they're doing with their time, with their energy, with their money?

I think that that's some older brother energy.

In his book, *Prodigal God*, written by Tim Keller, he points out that the younger son was lost in his badness, and the older brother was lost in his goodness. You can be lost in both. One had run to rebellion. The other had retreated to resentment and self-righteousness. Jesus portrays a father who loved both of them and wanted both of them at the table.

I've been doing this for decades, and I'm just telling you that my heart breaks for what can happen when my vision of what it means to follow Jesus slowly goes from outward exclusively to inward. From God, what have you done for me? Thank you so much. What are you calling me to - what are you doing for me lately? What do I get from this? What is in it for me?

And I just wonder as Jesus is sharing this, he's telling this parable. It's at the end of a triplet of parables. He's been trying to build to this point. I just wonder if he's got tears in his eyes because he's looking at religious leaders who knew better. They knew so much better. But just like the older brother, they weren't doing better. They weren't living better. It had never gone from their head to their heart.

The religious leaders, they were standing outside of the party. This was a community celebration. When the fattened calf was being killed, everybody in town came. Everybody's like, "They're having a party and we're all coming." But they were so resentful. They couldn't even see in Jesus' time in ministry what was happening. They had drifted into a world where they didn't want hope for others and they didn't think they needed it for themselves. God forbid that happened to us.

They had forgotten that when hope is for everyone, the lost come home and the found come alive. That we don't graduate from our need for grace. We don't graduate from our need for the gospel. We graduate into it. We learn our need for it on a greater level.

Can you imagine what this story would have looked like or your story or your family or your workplace if both the older brother and the younger brother could come sit at the table together? Jesus genuinely loves everybody. And he wants everyone back from wherever they've been to be at his table forever.

There's a line that's shaped a lot of Menlo's history that's set around here from time to time. Maybe you've heard it before. And the line is this. We're a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints. Which is true, but I wonder if I could just maybe give us an updated version of this line. We're a hospital for sinners and saints.

Again, I think sometimes we have this idea that if you don't know Jesus and you come here, you should pray a prayer. You should make a decision to follow Jesus. You should reorient your life to the goodness of God in it, which is one hundred percent true. But then sometimes we think and then it's all on you. The same grace in the same hospital is available and necessary for those of us who have come to know Jesus as those who don't yet know him.

Some of you, you need to come home. Some of you, you need to come alive. And we need the same grace today as we've always needed it. See, at Menlo Church, we are becoming a home for the wanderer and the weary, the rebellious and the resentful, the hurting and the searching. That's what we're doing in this waiting because hope is for everyone.

In the waiting, the father was preparing for the miracle and that is the season that we're in as a church. We're investing in a home worth coming back to. We're becoming a people ready to welcome those who are not yet here.

Menlo, here is what it's all about for us today. It means just like the father in Jesus' story didn't know when the sons would come home. He did not know how long it would take, what condition they'd be in when they got back or how much their wandering would cost them. But he was certain of one thing, that whenever they came home, he wanted to be ready. And that's exactly what we're doing here today.

We are preparing now for what God's going to do next. We are preparing now for the son or the daughter who feels too far gone. We're preparing now for the neighbor who has never known the love of God, who's desperately trying to find hope in a hopeless world. We are preparing now for the student who will one day walk into a room that we haven't even built yet. We're preparing now for the family who will be changed long after we are gone. We are doing today what the father did while he waited. We are preparing the house.

And today all across every campus, we are going to respond together. On your way in, you should have received a card, a Hope for Everyone Commitment Card. Again, if you're new, hopefully this is just an opportunity to get to know us a little bit. But if Menlo Church is your home, this is a tool for you. If you didn't get one of those and you need one, you can just slip your hand up. Somebody will bring you one.

But I want to explain to you what's on that card and invite you to participate if Menlo Church is your church home. There are two main

sections on that card. One section is if you made a commitment last year. Many of you last year made a sacrificial commitment and you've watched God stretch your faith in new ways over the last year. I heard several people tell me this story at the end of last service where they took a step last year for the first time ever and God showed up in unbelievable ways. God tells us, "Don't test me in anything, anything except this one thing. Be generous and see what I do."

Some of you wrote down a number last year without knowing what the next twelve months would hold and you have been shocked by God's faithfulness in your life. Some of you, you've sensed God stirring in you a deeper desire during this season. And God's inviting you to take another step, a deeper step. And so for some of you, if you've already made a commitment, but God is calling you to stretch that to something new this year, then this top section is for you to write the additional amount that God's calling you to give. It doesn't replace your original commitment. It's simply your way of saying to God that God, you've been faithful, and I want to stretch in faith with

you. And that's for some of you, man, that's that's such a big deal. I just want to say thank you so much.

The second section is for those of you who were maybe not here last year or you didn't make a commitment. Maybe you were new. Maybe you weren't ready then, but you're ready now. Maybe your life has changed, but honestly, maybe it hasn't. Maybe your heart has changed. This is your moment to join us for the remaining two years of this initiative. You're not joining late. You're joining right on time. Your commitment matters deeply because we cannot reach the next three percent of the Bay Area unless we go together.

You've heard me say this. Our primary goal in this is one hundred percent participation. We're about seventy-four right now. And so we want to give space to be able to do this together. This section is your way of saying, "This is my home. These are my people. And I'm ready to help prepare the house."

Now, here's what I want you to hear from my heart. There is no comparison in the kingdom of God. There's no pressure that I'm trying to put on you in this moment. There's no guilt. This is just an invitation. It's an invitation to pray, an invitation to ask God, God, what is it you would have me do, an invitation to trust, and an invitation to step into the kind of faith that really makes you come alive? Jesus says that, "wherever your treasure is, that's where your heart really is."

This is a pulse check for those of us who have been walking with God for a long time. In a moment, you're going to have a chance during worship to just process and reflect what God may be calling you to do or commit or recommit. Commit for the first time. Everybody can probably do something. Some people can do more. And there are a few people who can do the unimaginable. And here at Menlo, we have all three of those groups.

God's going to likely whisper a number to you that maybe you knew, but you've never written down. He's going to call you to write it down.

And then in a moment, you'll be invited to stand and there'll be boxes at the front of the room. I'd love for you to just use this as a moment to mark God's faithfulness and to say, "God, I'm in. I believe that what you're doing all around the Bay Area, what you're doing through Menlo, I want to be a part of that." And that number, whatever it is, that's between you and God.

Now, here's the thing. For some of you, this is going to be your very first step of trusting God in the area of generosity. You have never done that before. It's between you and him. And for some of you, you're in a season where you go, Phil, I literally just cannot give financially. You don't know my situation. It's just not possible. And I would say, man, I'm so glad that you're here. Your presence, your prayers, your service, they matter so deeply. And if that's the spot you find yourself in, desperate, trying to figure out what's next, we have people ready to pray with you at every one of our campuses after every service. And they'd love to pray with you and maybe even connect you to some of those resources today to help give you support.

So, here's what I want to do. In just a second, I'm going to give you a chance to just take a moment of silence. We don't have very many moments like that. And as we do, would you do me a favor? Maybe open up that card, but just put your hands up to the heavens like this. Close your eyes and let's ask God this simple question and just listen. God, what would you like me to do? Take just a moment and listen.

God, whether we are the rebellious or the resentful, would you remind us that you love us, that you have a mission for us, that there's a call on our life, that you want to see more people that don't know you come to know you and grow in you. Would you give us the chance even in these next few moments, God, to as a community step out in faith for the kinds of investments all around the Bay Area, all around the world, and then right here in our own campuses to be able to take steps that just like those decades and centuries ago did so that we would have the spaces we have today, we would do for the generations to come.

Thanks that we are in a community that has been doing this for so long. Help us to live into the legacy that you have given us. God, I pray that future leaders and future members at Menlo, future people who call this place home would be grateful for this moment and the willingness we were willing to take to be responsive to the call you've placed on our life. It's in Jesus' name. Amen.

SERIES RESOURCES

BOOKS:

- *Generosity: Moving Toward Life That Is Truly Life* – Gordon MacDonald
- *The Treasure Principle* – Randy Alcorn
- *Counterfeit Gods* – Tim Keller

PODCASTS:

- *The Generosity Podcast* – NCF
- *Gospel in Life* – Tim Keller (episodes on stewardship and calling)

WEBSITES:

- gospelinlife.com
- nationalchristian.com
- menlo.church/hope
- <https://generousgiving.org/>

