

Oh Say Can You See?

Prayer

T.E. Lawrence once said, "All men dream but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds awake to the day to find it was all vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for the many act out their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible..."

As a Church do we just think about the vision or do we get up and take action to bring about God's vision?

About 350 years ago a shipload of travelers landed on the northeast coast of America. The first year they established a town site. The next year they elected a town government. The third year the town government planned to build a road five miles westward into the wilderness.

In the fourth year the people tried to impeach their town government because they thought it was a waste of public funds to build a road five miles westward into a wilderness. Who needed to go there anyway?

As a Church are we responding to the vision in faith or are we waiting for all the I's to be dotted and T's to be crossed? It is really easy to shoot down an idea, but really hard to actually get behind the vision and find ways to make it work. Where there is a will... There is a way

Lynn Anderson once said: "Here were people who had the vision to see three thousand miles across an ocean and overcome great hardships to get there. But in just a few years they were not able to see even five miles out of town. They had lost their pioneering vision.

With a clear vision of what we can become in Christ, no ocean of difficulty is too great. Without it, we rarely move beyond our current boundaries."

As a Church have we taken such a long journey through hardship to get to where we are today to just give up on the local purpose and vision of the Church? Have we become weary in well doing? Have we surrounded ourselves with man made boundaries that God never intended?

Bob Logan: "Vision: the capacity to create a compelling picture of the desired state of affairs that inspires people to respond; that which is desirable, which could be, should be; that which is attainable. A godly vision is right for the times, right for the church, and right for the people. A godly vision promotes faith rather than fear. A godly vision motivates people to action. A godly vision requires risk-taking. A godly vision glorifies God, not people."

As a Church do we allow fear to paralyze us from moving forward? Fear kills vision and momentum. Do we choose to act in faith?

George Barna: “Vision is the ability to understand the history, the present condition, and the potential of the church, and to conceive a plan for action that will maximize the ministry potential. More often than not, vision is a result of having spent much time absorbing the facts about the community, knowing the resources upon which the church can call (people, funding, facilities, equipment, etc.), and devising sound but creative strategies for moving forward. Vision always entails progress: it is never satisfied with the status quo. “

I have been at Crossroads for almost 2.5 years now and over that time; I have heard many tales of what has come before in our church. By your testimonies, I have seen in my mind the hardships the struggles of the history of this church. I look at our church today and I am encouraged, we are being set free, barriers are being broken, hurts are being mended and so on. These are exciting times because upon the foundation of this church, which I believe with my whole heart is Jesus Christ, we will be moving forward TOGETHER with a plan or plans. I believe that each person here is being fed on the Word of God. We won't do anything unless God is with us.

My friends, this morning God is with us and it is soon coming time to move this church forward. Vision without action is useless just as faith without works is dead.

Over the last couple of years you have heard me quote the verse from Proverbs 29:18 that tells us that where there is no vision the people cast of restraint. Other translations say that the people perish. The actual root is the Hebrew word Para which literally means to perish, to refuse to listen to go backwards to dismiss and so on. What the implication is here is that we become negligent to our own destruction.

Now our mission here at Crossroads is simple:

- We Worship God
- We Love All People
- We Embrace Community

Now we have a vision that Jesus Christ himself established in his great commission to us. He said that we should make disciples. His vision was the whole world. So is ours. How do we get there?

We achieve this by embracing our mission. We set our hearts to truly worship God. We change our attitudes and perspectives so that we can indeed love all people. And... We move outside of our comfort zone within these four walls and spread God's love. First we learn to show it to Salmo, then we show it to the world.

Let's take a look at Nehemiah briefly.

In 445 BC there was a man named Nehemiah, he was the Royal Cup-Bearer. In short, he delivered the wine to the King. At this time the king of Persia was Artaxerxes. We take up the narrative in the 20th year of his reign.

Nehemiah 1

I am Nehemiah son of Hacaliah, and in this book I tell what I have done. During the month of Chislev in the twentieth year that Artaxerxes ruled Persia, I was in his fortress city of Susa, when my brother Hanani came with some men from Judah. So I asked them about the Jews who had escaped from being captives in Babylonia. I also asked them about the city of Jerusalem. They told me, "Those captives who have come back are having all kinds of troubles. They are terribly disgraced, Jerusalem's walls are broken down, and its gates have been burned." When I heard this, I sat down and cried. Then for several days, I mourned; I went without eating to show my sorrow, and I prayed: LORD God of heaven, you are great and fearsome. And you faithfully keep your promises to everyone who loves you and obeys your commands. I am your servant, so please have mercy on me and answer the prayer that I make day and night for these people of Israel who serve you. I, my family, and the rest of your people have sinned by choosing to disobey you and the laws and teachings you gave to your servant Moses. Please remember the promise you made to Moses. You told him that if we were unfaithful, you would scatter us among foreign nations. But you also said that no matter how far away we were, we could turn to you and start obeying your laws. Then you would bring us back to the place where you have chosen to be worshiped. Our LORD, I am praying for your servants-- those you rescued by your great strength and mighty power. Please answer my prayer and the prayer of your other servants who gladly honor your name. When I serve the king his wine today, make him pleased with me and have him do what I ask

Now Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and as a Jew this disturbed him greatly. He had a burden on his heart. Because of this he asked the King for permission to return to Judah as the governor of the province and rebuild the walls.

This was not so popular with the Samaritans the Ammonites, the Arabs and the Philistines. They tried to trick him in violating Jewish law, they tried repeated tried to derail the project.

You see Nehemiah had a burden placed on his heart. This, my friends is the beginning of vision. Sometimes there is an actual "Vision" But none the less we see Nehemiah had a burden on his heart with a goal established.

What lessons can we learn from Nehemiah about vision?

Lesson #1 – What does God want done?

When Nehemiah started his rebuilding project, he didn't just jump in. He spent three days resting, setting up the running of his house, planning and praying. Nehemiah

chapter 2 and verse 11 ASV tells us this his passion was lit in the quiet places with God.

“So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem; neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.”

Notice passion here - not complacency, God put this on his heart. So many confuse peace with complacency. Peace is not the absence of difficult; it is confidence and assuredness in Christ in the difficulty.

Day three he goes for a night looksee and checked out the city. He literally took the lay of the land. He studied his surroundings to understand how it was put together. He assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the city.

Notice he didn't say its God's plan let him do it. NO! He took the burden that was placed on his heart and did what was necessary to make it a reality. In my opinion he co-labored with God on the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

Lesson #2 - Create a vision in the people

The next morning Nehemiah calls a town meeting where he describes the wreckage. He instilled motivation in their hearts by pointing out that their neighbors held no respect for the Jews or their God.

He didn't call them to the vision through simple pride but rather in his words he casts them a vision of God's provision for their restoration. In verses 17 and 18 we see that the people jumped to their feet with cries to rebuild the city.

A progressive and restorative vision had been established through prayer, obedience, good stewardship, passion and skill.

Lesson three... Execution by leadership not control

Nehemiah had an order from the king for the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem. He was in charge as governor; he could have opened himself up to control but instead of using force and manipulation. Instead of guilt tripping and cries to national obligation, he inspired them.

His words spoke life to them. The man is the message. The bible tells us in Luke 6:45 that out of the abundance of our hearts the mouth speaks. In the spirit, when someone speaks from the heart it lights a flame, it kindles passion. Two completely different individuals can speak the same pretty words, and yet crowds will rally to one and not the other. Why? I believe it is because you and I can tell when something is just empty promises and flowery words and when a person is speaking from the heart. Something just resonates in your spirit.

The bible tells us in proverbs 29:18, that without a progressive vision the people dwell aimlessly. When people see Gods vision for their lives, they don't stop attending church, they don't stop fellowshiping with each other and they don't fall away, because the vision ignites their heart.

Does the vision of the Holy Spirit for this church ignite your heart today?

Lesson four... Relationship

Nehemiah did not stand over top and lord over the construction as governor. He knew who he was and that was enough. He got down with them in the trenches, he identified with them. He included himself in their number. He could have delegated damage reports and assessments, but he took ownership and went to establish the vision in himself.

Nehemiah reaches the people by personally being involved with them.

Nehemiah 2:17-18

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work. People are not motivated by complacent leaders but by those who will get into the trenches. Noticed how he used "WE" and "US" he declares that he is on the journey with them. He built relationship through their shared vision.

Can we agree that vision is necessary? If it is how do we see it done?

Let's look at how we are too support the vision that God has established for his church:

Financially

Malachi 3:10-12 CEV

I am the LORD All- Powerful, and I challenge you to put me to the test. Bring the entire ten percent into the storehouse, so there will be food in my house. Then I will open the windows of heaven and flood you with blessing after blessing. I will also stop locusts from destroying your crops and keeping your vineyards from producing. Everyone of every nation will talk about how I have blessed you and about your wonderful land. I, the LORD All- Powerful, have spoken

2 Corinthians 9:7-10 CEV

Each of you must make up your own mind about how much to give. But don't feel sorry that you must give and don't feel that you are forced to give. God loves people who love to give. God can bless you with everything you need, and you will always have more than enough to do all kinds of good things for others. The Scriptures say, "God freely gives his gifts to the poor, and always does right." God gives seed to farmers and provides everyone with food. He will increase what you have, so that you can give even more to those in need

Involvement

Hebrews 10:25 CEV

Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer.

Acts 2:42-47 CEV

They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. All the Lord's followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved

Seeking God

2 Chronicles 7:14,15 ESV

...If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him

Prayer

James 5:16b NKJV

...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

A little commercial here... Prayer meeting - Wednesday at ~ 7 pm

Let me wrap this up with a neat little bow...

We need to support our church as a storehouse of ministry to our community. We support this vision in three primary ways:

- Financially through tithes and gifts
- With Time and dedication. By taking an active part in the church and its ministries
- By Seeking God's direction through prayer

I close with this... Proverbs 29:18a KJV

Where there is no vision, the people perish...

The challenge is to see the vision, to be a part of the vision and to support the vision.

James 2:15-17

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Let's Worship God!

Let's Love All People!

Let's Embrace our Community!

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