



## Chapter 6 Establishing the Vision

In our day, deciding the mind of Christ for the direction of a given local Church and then creating a game plan to accomplish that vision, is considered to be just about the most important expression of leadership. The problem we face immediately is that to achieve these goals we must secure the support and agreement of the flocks we lead and right there is the bottle neck.

Number one, who says a local Church must have a specific vision or mission statement anyway? You search in vain in the New Testament for the Apostles' teaching on establishing such a thing. Granted it "may not" be a bad idea, but it is approached with such vigor today that you would swear Jesus Himself had stood up and made some powerful sweeping command, "*Discover my mission statement unique to your gathering and then invest all of your time, talents, and money, into accomplishing it!*" The trouble is, He didn't, and we may be too corporate minded in this regard too.

Do we really need a mission statement, or a specific vision that is unique to our local fellowship? The New Testament has made it very clear that the basic elements are love God and love people. Loving God will be expressed through prayer, worship, and obedience, and loving people will be expressed through caring for, teaching, evangelism, and encouragement. Sure there are breakdowns of these broad categories, but really, what is so unique or needs to be unique about these things? The doing of them should be more or less automatic when people are brought into contact with the living God. Paul expresses it well in 2 Corinthians chapter five.

2 Cor 5:14 (NKJV) For *the love of Christ compels us*, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;

If anything else other than experiencing the love of Christ becomes the motivation for the various expressions or directions of a local fellowship then I guarantee you it won't be long before there will be unrest in the people and the Holy Spirit will be hindered in His leadership.

### **People are more Important than the Vision**

Is it wrong to have a specific vision, or to take these basic elements expressed in the Gospels and Epistles and attempt to express them in terms that are clear and form the defined direction of a given local fellowship? Certainly the answer would have to be "no." But, when the vision becomes bigger than God Himself, or begins to treat people as a means to accomplishing that vision then the vision has become bigger than God and bigger than the people, and it is moving in the wrong direction.

There is nothing in scripture that even implies a given fellowship ought to have any kind of corporate vision for their lives. If the Spirit specifies a vision, either short term or long term, then of course who would want to argue with the Spirit, but to assume each fellowship "needs" a vision, has far more to do with a "Corporation" view of the Church, than the "Simple" view portrayed in the New Testament. Modern pastors, under the compulsion to appear as the CEOs of their

corporations, have taken their cues from the corporate business world, and assumed, if they are the good CEOs they desire to be they will automatically develop an elaborate vision statement for the people they lead. This is completely unnecessary, and often forms a snare for the people.

Over the years I have watched leadership teams attempt to define the vision they think God has given to their fellowship and then jam their congregation into such a vision. The vision becomes a monster that demands excessive time, energy, and money. People are encouraged to see the vision as being more important than simply living their Christian lives; more important than their prayer lives, their family, and their health. The vision becomes their life. The problem with this is that the vision becomes an artificial mechanism to rally the troops to fund and man the various programs the leadership have decided should define their gathering.

Very often little sensitivity is expressed towards the congregation in the developing of this vision. The leadership decide what they are going to do, and from then on it becomes a matter of selling, pressuring, and cajoling, the flock into supporting and funding their vision. It will frequently be heard, "*Vision equals Money.*" Of course this means, "*We have decided for you what your vision should be and now we want you to fund our vision. If you do it you will be pleasing to God. If you don't, you will disappoint God and miss the day of your visitation.*" Even penning these thoughts are painful to me because I have seen and heard of this manipulation taking place in Church after Church across America.

## **Vision Sensitivity**

The leadership become a little isolated world unto themselves, dreaming up these mission statements and then sharing them with the congregation, as though the congregation will automatically share their enthusiasm and identify the totality of their lives with these statements, to the same degree that the leadership have. Leadership must somehow stay connected to the reality of the average member of their local fellowship. Most people don't come to gathering just waiting to hear the newest expression of the Church's vision, that is going to require of them more time and money. They work hard all week, generally just barely have enough time and money to love and care for their families, and they don't come to the gathering with the expectation and desire of hearing of yet new and challenging ways that the leadership have dreamed up for consuming more of their time and money. For the average member they come to Church wanting to hear some encouraging and insightful words, and to fellowship with people of like faith and interests. When leadership fail to recognize this they show themselves to be foolish and insensitive to the daily reality of the lives of their people.

## **Challenging - Not Overwhelming**

Does this mean that leadership should not challenge their people? Certainly not! The congregation needs to be challenged. All of us, to be spiritually healthy, need to be stretched a little beyond our comfort zones, but the leadership must stay continually aware of the reality of the daily lives of their flock. Most people want Church to be simple and relational, not high powered and full of pressure. If leaders forget this then they are losing touch with their congregations and misusing their authority.

Now let's come back to the question of vision in the first place. Where is it written that the leadership develop the vision and the people are then expected to embrace it? Leadership need to feel where their people are. They are to involve their congregation at every step of the development of their vision. If this is done the congregation will be spared having an insensitive leadership force feeding a vision element down the throats of unprepared people. If the flock resists the new element

then the leadership must see themselves as the servants of the people, not their slave masters. They will need to back off, pray some more, and wait until a later time. It is morally wrong to use their position of influence and authority to intimidate the flock into embracing and giving to the vision concept. If leadership will recognize that they don't own the Church, and therefore don't have the right to push the Church in the direction they want it to go, then much pain will be spared. If the congregation doesn't feel equal ownership of the vision before the vision is advanced, then the advancement will do more to hurt the Church than help it.

I have talked to countless people over the years who finally left their Churches, because they became sick and tired of going to Church only to hear another vision element being drummed and pushed onto a weary flock. Everyone inherently, by inherently I mean within their spirit, knows that Church isn't to be that way. Anyone with a third grade level education can read the New Testament and see that nothing of this kind of pressure was taught by the Apostles. It won't be long before people in these high powered vision Churches will begin to peel off and look for more simple and loving fellowships, where Jesus is lifted up and the people are allowed to fall in love with Christ, and serve Him out of their own vision received from Him. This fact alone may provide the needed fuel to move the people out of institutional Christianity, that will finally return the Church to the simple, unencumbered approach to Church life. In fact this is exactly what is currently happening.

Across the world, those who have accepted the vision of their leadership to create mega Churches, are discovering that mega or bigger, is not necessarily better. Twenty to thirty years of mega Church has created a vacuum of hunger for something far more relational, transparent, loving, and personal.

### **Vision must become Personalized**

The bottom line is that each member is to connect to his or her own vision in Christ. A local Church isn't to be so vision intensive that it eclipses the member's responsibility to find in Christ what it is that He would have them to do. The principle of vision should be brought down to the individual believer, much more than the corporate vision.

### **Beware of the “*Bigger is Better*” Vision**

Perhaps no more intensely is this vision crunch felt than in the Mega Church movement. Many Churches have bought into the “*Bigger is Better*” mentality of the corporate world, and have created a Church environment that is pressure filled with all of its activities and programs.

When we look at the Church in America, we note that the corporate image concept has taken a preeminent position in the minds of many leaders. The mega Church is a sign of a powerful pastoral administrator who has successfully articulated and administered an extensive mission statement to the point where he has created a Church that is much more like a local shopping mall, than a peaceful place of worship and fellowship. There is something for everybody, and the environment is as posh and comfortable as if you had entered an exquisite hotel.

Have we taken the “*Bigger is better*” concepts of AT&T and Microsoft and brought them into our Churches, to the point where what we have gained has caused us to lose what we can't afford to lose. Perhaps no one could present a case in which they provide proof that Jesus Christ will not work through the mega Church, but if the truth were to be known, there are really very few things that Jesus can't make some use of. Just because Jesus works through many of the mega Churches

in our land may not be evidence that He is pleased with the concept.

All too often the temptation to pressure, coerce, and manipulate the people of God, to provide sufficient service to and money for the expensive programs of the mega Church, is a great temptation. After all, the bills have to be paid, the staff expects it's paycheck.

My experience tells me that no one, that I have ever seen, has handled well the pressure to become manipulative when so much money is needed to keep the machine oiled and paid for. All kinds of incredible justification is developed to excuse the pressure and the frequent mentioning of the Church's financial needs. Somebody has to pay the bills, and the shepherd and his leadership team feel the pressure the most acutely. What are they going to do with their creditors breathing down their necks, tell them to "Trust God, we just aren't going to pressure our people?" Not likely! When the pressure to present a good image of Christians who pay their bills, to the financing bank, becomes great enough, then a lot of elaborate rationalization must take place to explain to the people why they just have to come up with enough tithe and offering money to get the elders out of their jam and pay the bills. Scriptures of God's promises to bless the liberal givers begin to fly. A call for 100% tithers becomes the barker's cry. Messages on tithing and commitment to the local Church become more and more regular. Messages on submission to the authority of the leadership and their vision becomes essential, otherwise, unless the people are sufficiently intimidated, they won't give enough. Giving is no longer a joyful expression of a thankful people, it is an expected due that is to be paid for all of the benefits and services received. While that may be appropriate at the local mall, I seriously question if it is appropriate in the local Church gatherings.

And all of the pressure isn't just on the congregations of these mega Churches. The leadership themselves are frequently under-paid and way overworked. Church for them is a business of meeting needs, administrating programs, meeting the people's expectations, attending planning sessions, and keeping the machine well oiled. I have watched leaders in these Churches serve and serve and serve until they can hardly remember what rest felt like. Church becomes for them a complicated set of responsibilities that they must attend to on a daily basis otherwise the vision will begin to crumble and they will have their jobs threatened or their value questioned. Migraine headaches, looks of exhaustion, tension, and stress often fill the days of those who labor in such institutions. In our day we have seen several well known pastors blow their testimony by some serious act of indiscretion. Where do we think such actions are born? These poor brothers are stressed out, emotionally on empty, and vulnerable to quick emotional fixes, I.e. immorality or unethical behavior. Church becomes just that, an institution, that rolls over the real needs of its people in favor of keeping the train moving ahead.

## **100 % Attendance?**

This chapter would be incomplete without addressing the issue of 100% Church attendance. Those Churches that develop a high degree of Vision and create intense pressure to commit to the Vision, do so at the risk of creating a pressure for the wrong thing. Let me explain. There is a right motivation for gathering and there is a wrong one. It isn't right to gather just because a Church service is going on. It is possible to go to gather for entirely wrong reasons. This should be fairly obvious, but often it isn't.

One of the wrong motivations for gathering is to do so because you don't want the leadership to find out you didn't. This may seem laughable, but I guarantee you it isn't. When the leadership push commitment to every service, so as to provide enough manpower and money to fulfill the Vision, then people can be pressured into coming to Church to keep the leadership happy, and fulfill their vision, rather than to come and meet God and His people. Obviously not many leadership teams

would call for 100% attendance for these reasons, but if one takes even a cursory look at the New Testament he will see that nothing of a 100% attendance is recommended. Therefore, while leaders will not tell their flocks 100% attendance is to further the vision and pay the bills, yet because the New Testament doesn't teach such a thing one will eventually come to understand that something less than the purest of motives is behind such a requirement. While the flock are told 100% attendance is in their best interest, and a protection against the devil's allurements, the reality is that such attendance is about other things than what is actually in the best interest of the people.

The verse that is often used, or misused, as the case may be, to support 100% attendance is Hebrew 10:25.

Heb 10:25 (NIV) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

I have chosen the text of the NIV because it most accurately communicates the meaning of the Greek here. The writer of Hebrews is not attempting to establish the frequency of gatherings or that attendance at every Church service is mandated. The Hebrew Christians have undergone such a serious attack on their faith that they are beginning to pull away from gathering with other believers.

The persecution has been more of an intellectual and emotional attack than a physical attack. Because they are predominantly Hebrew Christians, their Jewish brethren have attempted to undermine their faith in Christ. The writer of Hebrews systematically handles every major concern they have had about the relevancy and accuracy of their belief. So, in his agenda of topics to handle, he mentions the importance of believers gathering together. To make this verse do duty for the 100% attendance mandate, is to force this verse to say something the writer had no intention of saying.

To say that the phrase "*All the more as you see the Day approaching*" means we need to meet more than ever before as we see Jesus' return nearing, is again to do violence to this verse. All this means is that the closer we sense the coming of Christ, the more we must be careful to not be lone rangers. We need one another, and the corporate expression of the body of Christ has a dimension of Christian life that none of us can afford to miss.

Over the years, in many Churches, I have heard the leadership create such an overpowering pressure to be at every service of the Church, that the believers ended up believing they were less than true Christians if they didn't want to go to Church on a given Sunday. This is clearly wrong. And if the flock think they have felt pressure for this, it is nothing in comparison to what the support leadership team are made to feel. Absolute attendance is no option for staff pastors of many Churches. They either attend or lose their positions and salaries. There is no biblical mandate to have such an overpowering Vision that the maintenance of it requires every member to be at every service every week. There is no biblical mandate for every Christian to be at every service of the Church. If believers aren't coming because they love God and love His people, and enjoy meeting together to worship and receive teaching, then any other motivation is impure. I know, this will not square with many shepherds who may be reading this, but I can tell you from many years of Church experience, that your members are tired of having you pressure them into attending all of your meetings and programs. They want some time off to be with their families. They want to come because they love God, not because they don't want to disappoint you.

It is essential that we directly address this issue with our flocks. We need to stand up and say, "Listen, if you feel you want to do something else on a given Sunday, or whatever day you regularly gather, as long as it isn't sin you want to do, do it. Don't come because you think you are going to disappoint us if you don't come. Don't come because you think you are going to upset God if you

don't. Come because you want to worship. Come because you want to receive biblical teaching. Come because you enjoy fellowshiping with the saints. But don't come out of legalistic compulsion! God never intended Church to do that to people. We will miss you, but we'll see you next week. Enjoy yourself." You know something. If you say this to your flock it will blow their minds. I know you think your Church will be empty from now on, and you won't be able to pay the Church bills, but you will be surprised. The Church shouldn't have any bills anyway, and it will set your people free to come for the right reasons. In fact, from time to time you may need to lead the way, and take yourself and your family to the beach on a given Sunday. Let the Church know you are doing so. Let them know you will miss them and look forward to being with them next week, but that you intend to have a guilt free weekend with your family. You won't be attending Church anywhere. You are just going to play.

Let me say to you that if you are struggling with this you are trapped in legalism. You have lost the true joy for gathering and you are a driven leader. Even if you are a "Purpose Driven Leader," you are still driven, and drivenness is not a virtue, no matter who writes or tells you it is. You are in trouble, and chances are your family is sick of Church. It may even be, that if you don't turn this around in your life and in gathering of the saints, you will end up being partially responsible for your children and fellow gatherers losing all interest in Church, and your marriage may be slipping ever closer to the rocks of destruction, to say nothing of your own mental, emotional, and physical health.

Church is too good of a thing to make it bad by intimidating or shaming people into coming. I can remember countless times sitting around with various Church leaders hearing them complain about their Sunday morning service being well attended but they just couldn't get the people to come back for Sunday evening service. So what? Who made you the Holy Spirit? What verse do you twist to get it to teach that they have to come to Sunday evening service if they don't want to come? What set of verses do you twist to get them to say that commitment to the House of the Lord and the Vision of the Church mandates attending every service, or buying into your vision for the gathering? I'm going on record to say that there aren't any such verses, and I would invite anyone on the planet to produce biblical evidence for such a belief.

As leaders we need to carefully rethink our position on commitment to the Vision, in terms of the pressure we put on our people to be at every gathering.

Who are we as leaders to tell our people that if they gather somewhere other than "*our*" local Church, where "*we*" shepherd, that they are in violation of biblical teaching on the local Church? Where does the New Testament teach us that "*a*" local Church is the "*only*" valid place of gathering? Who says if believers want to gather in their home, or visit another fellowship, or attend a worship gathering other than in "*our*" local fellowship, they are missing God? Such sectarianism must appal the Lord, certainly it does His Church.

The entire notion of "competition" is nothing but carnality. For a gathering leader to be incensed that another leader is going to gather folks in their home down the street, is purely sectarian and carnal.

Now, conversely, if we have programs that are led by various Church members, those Church members should be committed to being at every meeting until the program has culminated. This will of necessity mean that we should not have programs that slot people into positions where they are going to be expected to be involved for the next 10 years. Every program should have a reasonable time line. It may be three weeks, six weeks, a year, but it probably shouldn't go beyond a year. Those who accept positions within those programs should be expected to faithfully serve within the definition of their role, but those programs shouldn't go on forever. When they are done those involved should be interviewed as to whether they desire to be involved in another similar

program. They need to be encouraged to carefully evaluate their personal needs and the needs of their family before they recommit to another season. In this way burn out is avoided, volunteers enjoy their ministries, and the leadership aren't stressed out because they can't get anybody to volunteer to staff their programs. Church actually becomes fun instead of a drudgery. And, let's take it a step further here...where is it written we even need "programs?" The Church need not be defined by its programs. Let it be defined by the presence of Jesus and love.

Church is too great a thing to make it something people "*Have*" to go to. We who lead need to be sensitive to the fact that not everybody else is going to be as "*Gun Ho*" as we are. This includes our families. All too often the children of ministry are turned off to Church because their "leader parents" can't see anything in life but Church. I am so certain that Jesus never intended this for His Church. We need to back off the pressure, and let our people find the joy of gathering once again.

## **Beware of Money & Vision**

More warnings about money were given by Jesus than about any other subject matter. He knew that we would have the greatest trouble here. And from my Church experience, I would have to say that the greatest challenge to honest and upright leadership has come in the area of money. Over the years I have watched leaders use their authority to cajole the flock into completing building projects that the people for the most part couldn't really see the need for, until scores of them left the Church tired of being harassed about money every Sunday. What damage has been done to them, in comparison to the value of having completed the building project? Will they ever again be able to trust leadership? The mega Church runs a tremendous risk of destroying the lives of its flock by creating so much pressure upon them until they finally either give in and give the money or blow up and leave the Church altogether.

Is there a way to have large, expensive programs and Churches, without succumbing to the temptation to use leadership position and authority to manipulate people into giving? Perhaps there is, but after 30+ years of observing Church life and the way things go in Churches, that just have to have bigger buildings and programs, I would have to say that I have yet to see any Church, anywhere in the world, avoid the pitfalls of manipulative authority surrounding the funding of these institutions. Far better to promote small, simple, and transparent fellowships, than gatherings in Church owned buildings.

I have watched men become slaves of policies and beliefs that they don't hold because their staff position was more important to them than to take a firm stand against abusive leadership. I have watched men sell their integrity to a senior shepherd who held the power of influence to remove them from their staff position if they didn't stop opposing him. When men are more afraid of losing their jobs than they are of violating their integrity, or dishonoring Jesus, and going along with a policy that they believe violates the integrity of the flock, then you can know that they have become hirelings and not true servant leaders. When men so love the honor of their position that they would sacrifice truth to keep that position, then something is wrong. Money buys more than just things, it has the power to buy integrity, submission to error, commitment to programs that keep them away from their families for too long a stretch of time, etc..

Somehow the early Church avoided the trap of paid staff positions, and expensive building, and programs. Have we really progressed beyond the early Church? Are our mega Churches, with high powered budgets and ministries, really accomplishing what we tell ourselves they are? Or have we sold our birthright for the prestige that big brings with it?

I believe a strong case can be made, from the New Testament, that a great part of the answer is

a staffless, buildingless, Church, where money can not be a temptation to leadership abuse? But, it is probably going too far to say that the institutional approach to Church guarantees financial failure. The issue of integrity of leadership is certainly the biggest issue, and one which if carefully scrutinized can function in mega Churches as well as home Churches. Can we hope for a leadership that is sufficiently spirit controlled that they won't little by little compromise integrity and begin to slip into worldly methods of leadership once the Church becomes large enough to require a staff and support for an extensive program budget? I guess I would have to say that in theory it has to be possible, but my experience tells me that the better part of wisdom will teach us that you can only push redeemed fallen man just so far before his integrity will begin to buckle, when faced with enough financial pressure. Scheming, rationalization, justification, and then spiritual manipulation, usually follow those who dream of mega Churches. Maybe it doesn't have to be this way, but unfortunately it has all too often been the norm.

Did Jesus intend for the Church to become a business? Do we see any hint of this in the apostles teachings? If so, I am at a loss to find it. Do they all warn about the tendency of leadership abuse when money enters into the picture? Definitely! Then why has the Church in recent years run so fast towards the red flags that Jesus and the apostles raised? What about our day has so encouraged men to believe they could stay away from the dangers they referred to? And if they are as successful as they say they are why is there such a hue and cry amongst the people of toxic faith and abusive leadership in the land? These matters must be given much more serious consideration.

### **Smaller may be better**

Probably the answer is not to mandate the House Church, but at the very least a moderate position that supports smaller gatherings over mega Churches would be leaning to the safer side of things.

If we preached multiply and conquer our communities through many local fellowships, rather than one large mega Church, we might find more giftings matured and functioning, with more people spiritually alive due to feeling needed. It's not my purpose here to discuss all of the merits of small Churches over mega Churches. It is my point to note that many of the dangers of the mega Church, in terms of leadership pressure, could be avoided by smaller fellowships based on much simpler visions.

### **Vision equals Magnifying Jesus**

The less Church is concerned with money, and the more it is concerned with lifting up and revealing Jesus, the better. The more our people come to hear about Jesus, and less about how much money is still needed for this project or program, the better. The more confidence that our people have to bring their friends and new converts to Church, knowing that they won't be pestered about giving their money to that Church, the better. The more leaders aren't so dependant upon the local Church to provide their entire salaries and thus run the risk of becoming hirelings and compromising their integrity to maintain their position, the better.

This isn't to say that some leaders shouldn't receive financial gifts, or that money should never be mentioned at Church, but Churches have become imbalanced and it's time for an adjustment. It's time that more servant, non-paid leadership positions, function in the local Church. It's even time for less of an emphasis on leadership and more of an emphasis on each believer developing an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. The Church has come to believe that they need to run to their staff leadership to solve all of their spiritual problems, after all that's what we pay them for isn't



it? If we de-emphasized leadership, killed salaries, and magnified Jesus, perhaps we would need less paid staff in our Churches, and leaders would be less stressed out by all of the demands on their lives. If leaders were leaders because of their example, than because they receive salaries, and have titles and offices, we might find people less people dependant upon them.

## Maintain Simplicity

Leadership needs to become much more casual and joy filled, than worn out by over use. The multiplication of staff meetings and time demands must stop. If we hope to have our leaders be strong leaders in their homes then we have to leave them enough time for their own families, instead of driving them so hard to meet all of the needs of the local Church. Take the professionalism out of leadership and we might find more people volunteering for it in the local Church.

Church isn't to be a well oiled machine where programs are brought off with the smoothness of a Madison avenue production. It is to be a place for simple folks to come together in a simple manner and simply love Jesus and one another. Church is to be a place where people come less to spectate and more to enter into the life of its community. Church is to be a place where relationship is the big word and leadership is the small word, where love is the big word, and money is the small word, where Jesus is the big word, and the pastor is the small word, where sharing, caring, and relating is what characterizes local Church, not fancy programs costing mega bucks and high powered leaders trained to drum it out of the people.

Paul says it so well in 2 Cor.11:3

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the *simplicity* and purity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!”

Where is the simplicity that Church life was meant to be, that the early Church was characterized by? I suspect we are lifting up another Jesus before our people. He said He was meek and lowly, yet we have Him as the great promoter of our mega programs. He was a servant, our leadership tend to expect the flock to serve them. He was unofficious, our Churches have become garish, expensive and lavish. What is the spirit of our Churches? Are they places filled with joy and power or are they places of pressure, shame, and intimidation? What spirit does the Church portray to the world in our day? Immoral, power hungry, money hungry, possessive, controlling and abusive! This may hurt, but read your newspapers and watch the movies. This is their impression of us.

What gospel or message are we sending from our Churches? The message has become less good news and more pressure. The message is money, power, control, submission, shame, and fear. Jesus anticipated that the message that would come from the Church would create righteousness, peace, and joy, by an emphasis on the Holy Spirit's ministry of revealing Jesus. Has it? Not by what most people say about their Church, and certainly not if the evidence of it happening is a people charged with excitement for evangelism.

Until the Church sees explosive growth again it must take an inward look and ask the question, why? When people find something that is wonderful and life changing, and it has brought them great joy and freedom from bondage, they will tell people about it. If they aren't telling people we need to be asking what message we are bringing that has killed their enthusiasm. We must not stop asking this question until our people are on fire. We must stop pointing shaming fingers in their faces for not being excited about our vision, or evangelism, and ask them what has killed their joy. People who are excited talk, its just that simple. People who find great restaurants tell their friends,

and the lines to get into those restaurants are a mile long at meal time. When our people aren't sharing, and the lines into our gatherings aren't long then we need to take a look at what we're serving and perhaps adjust our menu. Simple love of Jesus is a powerful drawing. Fancy buildings and high powered programs often tend to obscure Jesus. It's time to lift Him up and Him alone to the people of God. They are telling us by their inactivity that they are bored and hungry for the real thing.

I believe the cry of the Holy Spirit is RETURN TO THE SIMPLE! If we build bigger buildings because we think bigger is better, or fancier buildings because we are the Kings kids and think it will impress the world, we are foolish. For those who still favor buildings over homes, if you build bigger buildings it should be because you have maxed out the use of your present building, and to continue to max it out means to wear out the saints who have to keep on tearing down one usage of that building so that another usage can take place within it. Who cares if the gathering down the street just built a big fancy building, and the community is impressed with it. If the gathering with the smaller and less fancy home is more filled with the love of Jesus, guess where those who are hungry for Jesus are going to end up? It is truly time for all believers to honestly ask the question - "Is a building that seats hundreds really where we want our Churches to go? Or do we want to look carefully at the smaller setting?"

We don't value simple enough. It is time we do. Who says we need Church buildings? Who says we need sound systems? Whose says we need platforms and pulpits. When the leadership sit on platforms, elevated above the rest of the body, it sends out a wrong message; a message that they are superior. At all costs leadership need to avoid that kind of message.

The tradition of separating the speaking leaders from the congregation is such a device of isolation and distancing. Better that the speaking leaders be near the people and encourage congregation participation, than that they stand behind their wooden parapets and pontificate their lofty notions in settings where no one would dare object or challenge the teaching. We need to see simple, transparent, real leaders, communicating in ways that reveal they are far from "There." None of us are "There" yet. We're all just going "There." It is so simple and refreshing to hear a shepherd admit his weaknesses and frailties. It's so helpful for the people to realize that he hasn't got his act altogether either. Less emphasis on fancy style, and more emphasis on clear, honest declaration of simple truths is what the people need. When preachers are allowed to stand behind pulpits, and are given such respect that when they communicate false things, out of reverence for the setting and their office, we allow them to continue, this is wrong! It completely violates 1 Corinthians 14.

In every way, when it comes to the gospel, the Church and leadership, simple is better. Let First Interstate Bank have its elaborate buildings and expansive programs, with incredible budgets and high tech everything. What those leaders are needing, come Sunday, is a place to get away from it all and just meet the simple Christ, both in spirit and in His people. This should be their experience when the Church meets to worship Jesus. They're used to having to support expensive and elaborate visions. They just want to come to Church and find it totally different—refreshing. If we hope to harvest the world then we need to use Jesus' methodology rather than bring the world's vision strategies into our Churches. May God help us as we wrestle with the developing and maintaining of His vision for our local Churches.