

# **Vision and Values**

**Teacher Manual**

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## **Contents**

<b>Lesson 1-3 – The Definition and Importance of Vision.....</b>	<b>3-13</b>
<b>Lesson 4 – The Diseases Associated with Vision.....</b>	<b>14-21</b>
<b>Lesson 5-6 – The Source of Vision.....</b>	<b>22-32</b>
<b>Lesson 7 – Receiving a Vision.....</b>	<b>33-38</b>
<b>Lesson 8 – Characteristics of a Vision from God.....</b>	<b>39-45</b>
<b>Lesson 9-11 – The Qualities of a Vision Achiever.....</b>	<b>46-63</b>
<b>Lesson 12 – Writing the Vision.....</b>	<b>64-69</b>
<b>Lesson 13-14 – Key Elements of Vision Fulfillment.....</b>	<b>70-80</b>
<b>Lesson 15-16 – Communicating or Casting Vision.....</b>	<b>81-87</b>
<b>Lesson 17 – Creating a Team Vision.....</b>	<b>88-93</b>
<b>Lesson 18 – The Importance of Values.....</b>	<b>94-99</b>
<b>Lesson 19-20 – Identifying and Stating Core Values.....</b>	<b>100-113</b>
<b>Lesson 21 – Communicating and Implementing Values.....</b>	<b>114-118</b>
<b>Lesson 22-23 – Introducing New Values.....</b>	<b>119-128</b>
<b>Lesson 24 – The Vision and Values of City Life Church.....</b>	<b>129-133</b>

## Lesson 1-3

### The Definition and Importance of Vision

#### I. What are some of the things that have been said about vision?

##### A. In general

“A dream is your creative vision for your life in the future. You must break out of your current comfort zone and become comfortable with the unfamiliar and the unknown.” –Denis Waitley

“A sailor without direction knows no favorable wind.” Proverb, Unknown

“A blind man’s world is bounded by the limits of his touch; an ignorant man’s world by the limits of his knowledge; a great man’s world by the limits of his vision.” –E. Paul Hovey, 1908

“A vision without a task is a dream; a task without a vision is drudgery; a vision and a task is the hope of the world.” –Unknown

“Poor eyes limit your sight; poor vision limits your deeds.” –Franklin Field

“Vision encompasses vast vistas outside the realm of the predictable, the safe, the expected.” –Charles Swindoll

“But it is with man’s soul as it is with nature; the beginning of creation is—light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds.”

–Thomas Carlyle, 1836

“Progress will be carried forward by a series of dazzling visions.”

–Victor Hugo, 1864

“Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is simply passing the time. Action with vision is making a positive difference.” –Joel Barker

“Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others.” –Jonathan Swift

“The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight, but has no vision.” –Helen Keller

“A vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more.” –Rosabeth Moss Kanter

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” – George Bernard Shaw

“The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious.”

–John Sculley

## **B. In the business world**

“...there is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.” –Nanus, 1992

“Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion.” –Jack Welch

“People are more inclined to be drawn in if their leader has a compelling vision. Great leaders help people get in touch with their own aspirations and then will help them forge those aspirations into a personal vision.” –John Kotter

“Capital isn’t scarce; vision is.” –Sam Walton

“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.” –Henry Ford

## **C. In all realms of leadership**

“The whole world steps aside for the man who knows where he is going.”  
–Unknown Author

“Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps, down new roads, armed with nothing but their own vision.” –Ayn Rand

“Vision is not a fantasy of the impractical or improbable such as winning the lottery. Rather, vision is a vivid image in the mind’s eye of transforming the impossible into the possible.” –Dan Wilson

## **II. What does the Bible say about vision?**

### **A. Proverbs 29:18a**

*Where there is no vision, the people perish... –KJV*

*Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint... –NKJV*

*When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. –NLT*

### **B. I Samuel 3:1**

*Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation. 2 And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, 3 and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God was, and while Samuel*

was lying down, 4 that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, “Here I am!”  
I Samuel 3:1-4

The phrase “no widespread revelation” is also translated “no open vision” or “visions were quite uncommon.” This is most likely speaking of God actually speaking through the medium of visions and dreams. It speaks of a time of spiritual darkness where people were not necessarily in tune with the voice of God.

C. Jeremiah 23:16

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD.*

*This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. –NIV*

This is most likely speaking of prophets who tell you they have seen a vision from the Lord and they are actually not telling the truth. Whether a vision is worthless or not, whether a vision is only so much false hope or not depends on the origin or source of the vision. Is this vision only from our own minds? Is fulfilling vision just a matter of the power of positive thinking?

D. Habakkuk 2:2-3

*Then the LORD answered me and said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

This verse highlights the fact that in order to run with any vision that vision must be clear. The clearer we make the vision, the easier and the more quickly others will be able to enter into that vision.

*And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision and engrave it so plainly upon tablets that everyone who passes may [be able to] read [it easily and quickly] as he hastens by. —Amp*

E. Acts 26:19

*Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision...*

Visions that come from the Lord carry with them the idea of accountability. We must be true to what we have received.

### III. How can “vision” be defined?

The English word “vision” comes from the Latin *videre* which means “to see.”

A. The word “vision” means several things in modern language.

1. The faculty of sight in the human body
2. The act or power of seeing
3. The manner in which one sees or conceives of something
4. A mental image produced by the imagination
5. A manifestation to the senses of something immaterial

B. The word “vision” means something unique when it comes to leadership.

1. Unusual competence in discernment or perception
2. Intelligent foresight

C. The word “vision” has a prophetic aspect to it.

1. A supernatural revelation to the mind of man
2. Something seen in a dream, trance, or ecstasy
3. Something immaterial that has been seen in the mind that can become a reality

“For leaders, a vision is not a dream; it is a reality that has yet to come into existence.” –Neil H. Snyder, Michelle Graves

D. The word “vision” refers to your strategic intent or ultimate goal.

A vision is a clear, concrete guiding picture of the results or condition you want to achieve.

“Vision refers to the force within a leader that spreads like wildfire when properly communicated to others. Vision refers to an image of the future that can be discussed and perfected by those who have invested in it. Vision is also the glue that binds individuals into a group with a common goal.”

–Neil H. Snyder, Michelle Graves

#### **IV. How important is vision in the natural realm?**

When we speak of vision in the natural realm, we are talking about eyesight. How valuable is our eyesight? What can we do when we have eyesight that we cannot do when we do not have eyesight?

A. Eyesight is essential in life to perform many of the normal functions of life.

Even though technology has significantly helped the visually impaired, there are still many spheres of life that are off limits to those without sight.

- Driving a car.
- Becoming a surgeon.
- Playing golf.

- Serving in the military as an infantryman.
- Flying an airplane.
- Interior design.
- Playing sport.

B. Eyesight serves us in many ways (compare to a blind person).

1. It helps us to see our destination well before our arrival.
2. It helps us to make sure steps so as to avoid stumbling.
3. It helps alert us to dangers in our pathway.
4. It helps us to maintain balance.
5. It helps us to see how our present actions will impact our immediate future.
6. It helps us to accomplish everything more quickly and simply.
7. It gives us perspective by helping us to see how the part relates to the whole and the whole to the part.
8. It adds color and meaning to our experiences (top of Mount Everest, watching TV).
9. It helps us to enjoy the ride (Sight-seeing).

## V. **How important is vision in a person's achievement of life purpose?**

Whether we are talking about a purpose for our life, the purpose for a ministry, the purpose for our business or the purpose for a local church, the importance of vision is much the same.

The truth is, you will never apprehend the thing for which you were apprehended without a sense of vision (Phil. 3:13-14).

*Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

The local church will never prevail against the gates of hell without a clear sense of vision (Mt. 16:18).

Where are you going as a person? Where are you going as a leader? What are your ministry targets? Where do you hope to be in five years? Ten years? What is reason for the existence of your local church or business? What is the local church or business trying to accomplish?

These and other questions all deal with the area of vision and specifically the area of vision direction.

There are far too many people who lack vision for their lives and as a result they lack direction. Far too many local churches are in the same state. Many churches have never really defined themselves? They have not defined themselves to the world. Even worse, they have not defined themselves to themselves. If you ask most church members in the world today 'What is the vision of your local church?,' very few people would be able to articulate a vision.

Churches and businesses are often led by "maintainers" rather than visionaries. Most people did not begin as "maintainers," but things have happened and they have changed.

- A. Perhaps the leader is an apostolic or catalytic church planter who loves the challenge of birthing a church.

Even though they are good at birthing local churches, they may not have the same grace to pastor the church for the long term. They do not have the grace to take that church to a mature expression of the Body of Christ. The vision was short term rather than long term and now that the short term goals have been reached there is a lack of a sense of direction.

- B. Perhaps the leader is the product of an old ministry model.

In this case pastoral ministry is defined as caring for the church rather than equipping the church. Many pastors are restricted by their denominations to the role of chaplaincy where they are not given the authority to shape and to mold the local church. They serve for a season as the officiant at church rituals until they tire of the monotony and then move on to another situation and repeat the process. The scenery changes but yet there is no progressive vision.

- C. Perhaps the leader has suffered the disappointment of loss.

Perhaps they began with a certain idealism when it came to their vision and along the way "vision-destroyers" have pecked away at that vision. They have been told that what they are proposing is impossible and unattainable. They have been told that they need to get a grip on reality and accept the fact that their vision is really a "pipe dream." Unfortunately, they have believed the critics and set aside their original vision. They have decided to become "settlers" rather than "pioneers."

- D. Perhaps the leader is getting older and growing tired of the fight.

In this case they are not looking for any new mountains, new territory or new enemies. The reality is that they have lost the "Caleb" spirit. They are influenced by a culture that says, "You have paid your dues. Let the young people do it." They have been influenced by a culture of retirement, leisure and reward. They have been persuaded that it is time for them to take a back seat to what is going on around them.



- E. Perhaps the leader is more concerned about his or her personal livelihood than about the mission of the church.

Unfortunately as time goes on it is very easy to start thinking about securing our individual future. We start thinking about how we are going to survive in our old age. It is very easy for a ministry to shift focus as they get older. It is easy to think more about how I am going to live out my years on the earth rather than fulfilling Christ's mission through the local church.

- F. Perhaps the leader has not kept up with the times and has not adjusted his or her vision to keep pace and stay relevant.

They are still singing the old songs, playing the old instruments and repeating well-worn slogans. Their mantra is that "the old is better." They have in a sense given up on the modern generation. When new people come into a situation like this they often feel that they have gone through some "time-warp" and traveled back to bygone era.

- G. Perhaps the leader has a theology that does not promote the idea of vision.

If you believe that the church is going to fail and that it will have to be raptured out of this world in order for a remnant to be preserved, if you believe that there will be little or no faith on the earth when Jesus returns, if you believe that darkness is going to prevail over light, then you will never be a person with vision. However, if you believe that the church will be triumphant, glorious and functioning on all cylinders at the return of the Lord, you will have a lot of hope for the church and a vision for it to become what God originally intended.

- H. Perhaps the leader has not had a dynamic encounter with God that instills in one a sense of purpose and mission.

In order to have a strong vision you must sit where God sits, you must see what God sees. God has clearly revealed His purpose in His word, but often this requires a prophetic encounter with the Lord similar to that of Moses in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament. When you have such an encounter with the Lord it is much easier to stay focused and to press through the inevitable opposition that will come.

"Over a period of years, the church can allow itself to lapse into a maintenance mentality — it just seems to be getting by — that over time leads to ministry mediocrity. Every Sunday it is business as usual. The people come to church but often seem to be going through the motions. When they leave, not much has happened to them and not a lot takes place spiritually in their lives during the week."

—Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*

## **VI. What are the primary reasons for defining a vision?**

### **A. A defined vision clarifies direction.**

Before people get on a bus, a train or a plane they want to know where the vehicle is actually going. Pastors often invite people to come on board, but they fail to tell them where this vehicle is going. If the pastor or other leaders in the church cannot tell people where the vehicle is going people will be hesitant to commit themselves to the cause.

#### **B. A defined vision promotes unity.**

There is no question that unity is a primary factor when it comes to mission accomplishment. All one has to do is to read the pages of the Bible to see that unity is a powerful force in any endeavor whether that endeavor be for the purpose of good or evil.

If the vision of a leaders or a local church is not clearly defined, it is difficult for people to know exactly what they are to be unified with. Paul said that his desire was for the Corinthian believers to be of one mind and one judgment (I Cor. 1:10). If the vision of the leadership has not been clearly defined then people will debate over whose mind (opinion) and whose judgment should prevail.

When you clearly define and articulate a vision, it gives people the choice to be a part or not be a part. Those who choose to be a part have done so because they want to align themselves with others who have the same sense of conviction and vision. In addition, when people are a part of something that is consistent with their heart and vision they will have “staying power” when it comes to their personal involvement in the context of the vision.

#### **C. A defined vision solidifies leadership.**

It is easy to follow people whom you believe know where they are going. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. It is difficult to follow people who zigzag down the road of life with no sense of real direction. It is said that “an individual headed nowhere gathers few followers.” It was easy for Jesus to say to people, “Follow Me!” because Jesus knew what He was doing, where He was going and what He was trying to accomplish.

Paul was also able to say the same thing to people because he had received a heavenly vision from the Lord (Acts 26:19; Gal. 1:1).

“I define a leader as a godly servant (character) who knows and sees where he or she is going (mission and vision) and has followers (influence).”

—Aubrey Malphurs

#### **D. A defined vision gives value to the parts.**

When you have a clear picture of the goal, you have a better understanding of your unique part in accomplishing that goal. Even though your individual contribution is only a minor part of the total work, when you understand how what you do affects the goal it is easier to do what you do.

Two people can be doing the exact same thing in different settings. One person can be totally fulfilled while the other person can be frustrated. The difference between the two is that the one who is fulfilled understands why he is doing what he is doing and can see the big picture.

**E. A defined vision filters all decisions.**

Every pastor and church leader is faced with an incredible number of needs and opportunities for ministry. How does one decide which opportunities to take and which ones to let go. We all understand that no one can do everything. Having a clearly defined vision helps you to choose between good, better and best. It helps us to keep the main thing the main thing. If something cannot be seen to have a direct bearing on the declared purpose, it must be reduced in priority.

**F. A defined vision motivates and arouses emotion.**

Whenever you define a vision you inspire a definite response. People will either run away from your vision or they will run to your vision. If your vision sparks something in their hearts, they will join you in running after it with passion.

Ministries and leaders who are constantly begging for volunteers need to examine whether or not people have a good understanding of the vision.

**G. A defined vision inspires sacrifice.**

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:2-3*

People who are motivated by a cause are willing to expend their resources for the fulfillment of that cause. This includes the resources of...

1. Time
2. Talent
3. Treasure

**H. A defined vision fosters risk taking.**

When a person sees the prospect of a better future or the fulfillment of a lifelong dream as a potential reality, they are willing to risk the present for that future.

**VII. What are the key characteristics of an effective vision?**

In order for a vision to be effective in impelling us toward the fulfillment of purpose it must have certain characteristics.

**A. The vision must be worthwhile.**

This is where we who are in the Kingdom of God have a significant advantage. We are involved in the most worthwhile and significant endeavor possible. The purpose that God has declared over the church is infinitely higher than the development of a “better mouse-trap.”

If people are going to join themselves to you they must feel that what you are doing has genuine and lasting significance.

**B. The vision must be clear.**

“The single most important thing a leader can do for his or her followers is to provide the vision. How well the leader articulates the vision and how well the followers understand the vision are key to the success of any endeavor.”

–George Pejakovich

**C. The vision must be specific.**

When stating your vision it is not a time for generalities. Specific goals lead to specific and well defined activities that serve to reach those goals.

**D. The vision must be challenging.**

People want to achieve things that are not only significant, but that are also grand. People want a target for which they have to stretch. People want a target for which they have to exercise faith. People want a target that will require planning, sacrifice, teamwork and endurance. People want a target that when reached will be cause for celebration. People will put aside minor differences to accomplish a big goal.

**E. The vision must inspire.**

A vision will inspire others if it is challenging, worthwhile and significant. Whether a vision actually does inspire, however, is often contingent on the clarity and the passion with which that vision is communicated. Passion produces passion.

**F. The vision must be realistic and attainable.**

It is one thing to have a challenging vision; it is another thing to have an attainable vision. If people feel that there is absolutely no chance for vision fulfillment they will opt out early. Sometimes this means that a comprehensive vision must be shared in “bite sized” increments.

**G. The vision must be regularly evaluated.**

Very few visions are complete at their inception. Most visions have to be evaluated along the way and course adjustments must be made. There is nothing worse than riding something into the ground that is not working. This involves taking an honest look at the results on regular basis. This means that everyone

involved will have to be humble and committed to the higher goal. God does not put a premium on stubbornness.

#### **H. The vision must be accomplished.**

The goal of all vision is accomplishment. One accomplishment inspires other accomplishments. Failure can lead to skepticism. Goal fulfillment requires patient endurance. This is why it is so important to be sure of our vision before we preach it. Nothing will create skeptical disciples more quickly than a lot of unfinished projects, unfulfilled promises and unrealized expectations.

## Lesson 4

### Diseases Associated with Vision

*The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!* Matthew 6:22-23, NIV

#### **I. What are some conditions of the eye that can affect our vision?**

There are some common conditions that afflict the natural eye that are indicative of things that can distort our vision as leaders.

Note: All medical descriptions taken from [Mamashealth.com](http://Mamashealth.com).

##### **A. Farsightedness**

###### **1. What is farsightedness (hyperopia)?**

Farsightedness is a condition where a person can see distant objects very well, but has difficulty seeing objects that are close. Objects that are near will appear blurry to people who have farsighted vision.

Farsightedness occurs when light rays entering the eye focus behind the retina, instead of directly on it. The eyeball of a farsighted person is shorter than the eyeball of a person with normal vision.

###### **2. What are the symptoms of farsightedness?**

There are many symptoms. The most common symptoms are:

- inability to see objects that are close to you
- headaches
- eyestrain
- squinting
- feelings of fatigue when performing work at close range

###### **3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?**

A farsighted leader is one who has great vision for all of the wonderful things that they hope to do in their lifetime, but they do not know how to focus on the things that are at hand that will help to get them to their destination.

This person's conversation about the future is grand. Unfortunately, the chances of their reaching these goals are very small. They get spiritual headaches when people try to get them to focus on the management issues that will be instrumental in achieving long term goals.

##### **B. Nearsightedness**

1. What is nearsightedness (myopia)?

Nearsightedness is a condition where a person can see close objects very well, but has difficulty seeing objects that are far away. Objects that are far away will appear blurry to people who have nearsighted vision.

Nearsightedness occurs when light rays entering the eye focus in front of the retina, instead of directly on it. The eyeball of a nearsighted person is slightly longer than the eyeball of a person with normal vision.

2. What are the symptoms of nearsightedness?

There are many symptoms. The most common symptoms are:

- inability to see objects that are close to you
- headaches
- eyestrain
- squinting
- feelings of fatigue when driving or playing sports

3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?

A nearsighted leader is a leader who gets caught up in the details. This leader is often driven by the “tyranny of the urgent” and lives his life putting out fires and reacting to each situation as if it was an isolated incident.

This leader thinks that he will arrive at his destination by simply being a good person and solving the problems that come into his life. This person’s destiny is actually shaped by external forces and circumstances. This person has no ability to separate the good from the better, and the better from the best. This person has difficulty prioritizing his actions because every task has the same value.

Someone who can see further down the road, knows what activity is consistent with the overall goal and can therefore decide what should be done and what should be left undone.

### C. Astigmatism

1. What is astigmatism?

Astigmatism is an irregular curvature of the lens or the cornea of the eye. It is the most common vision problem. It may accompany nearsightedness or farsightedness. Astigmatism is a lifelong condition. It may worsen slowly over time but usually, it remains stable throughout life.

Astigmatism is usually it is caused by an irregularly shaped cornea (corneal astigmatism). However, sometimes it is the result of an irregularly shaped lens (lenticular astigmatism).

Usually astigmatism is hereditary. If one or both of your parents have it, you will probably develop it.

2. What are the symptoms of astigmatism?

Some of the most common symptoms are:

- blurred vision
- distorted vision
- headaches
- eye strain
- squinting

Both kinds of astigmatism can usually be corrected with eyeglasses, contact lenses or refractive surgery.

3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?

Leaders with astigmatism are leaders who have been raised in a certain tradition under the influence of a particular “spiritual DNA.” Unfortunately, their DNA profile is not balanced or has not been shaped by biblical truth. As a result they have a warped vision. It is skewed.

Leaders with astigmatism see and evaluate everything based on how it fits into their worldview inherited from others. They have their own “lens” that distorts everything that they see. Wrong eschatological viewpoints can cause a warped lens.

#### **D. Glaucoma**

1. What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is the name for a group of diseases that can destroy the optic nerve. It literally means “hard eyeball.” Any one of the conditions classified as glaucoma can lead to irreversible blindness by damaging the optic nerve.

2. What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

Unfortunately, in the early stages of glaucoma, the only symptom is a gradual loss of vision. Vision loss usually begins with the peripheral vision. Peripheral vision is what you can see off to the sides when you are looking straight ahead.

3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?

Glaucoma occurs primarily in older people. Sometimes when you have been in leadership a long time or if you have done things a certain way for a long time it is easy to get tunnel vision, to become set in one’s ways and to get rigid



in one's perspective. After a while this person can only see what he or she is doing and can lose openness to other viewpoints.

Unfortunately, this vision condition is based on a sense that "we have it all." When this occurs we place ourselves in a position of inflexibility and are unable to learn and to grow. If this condition lasts long enough, it can lead to irreversible blindness or nerve damage to the point where we cannot change.

## **E. Cataracts**

### **1. What are cataracts?**

Cataracts are the clouding of the eye's natural lens. The lens lies behind the iris and the pupil. When a person has cataracts, they may have difficulty seeing. Cataracts affect vision by scattering incoming light. Cataracts are the leading cause of visual loss among adults 55 and older.

The eye's lens is very similar to a camera lens. It focuses light onto the retina at the back of the eye. The lens also adjusts the eye's focus, letting us see things clearly both up close and far away.

The lens is mostly composed of water and protein. As a person gets older, some of the protein clumps together and starts to cloud a small area of the lens. This is cataracts. Over time, the cloud may grow larger and cloud more of the lens.

### **2. What are the symptoms of cataracts?**

Symptoms vary according to the type of cataracts. When nuclear cataracts first develop the condition can actually bring about a temporary improvement in your near vision. However, the improved vision is short-lived and will disappear as the nuclear cataracts worsen.

Some of the most common symptoms of cataracts are:

- hazy or blurred vision
- dimmed colors
- light appearing too bright or glaring

### **3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?**

Leaders can develop spiritual cataracts over time by allowing some of the experiences of the past to cloud their vision. These past experiences could include unresolved conflict, broken relationships, unfulfilled promises or emotional hurts or wounding.

The more these things accumulate in a person's life, the worse their vision can become until they become totally blind. It is critical for those who want to see clearly that they are able to forget those things which are behind and not allow negative past experiences to destroy vision.

## **F. Dry Eye Syndrome**

### **1. What is dry eye syndrome?**

Dry eye syndrome is a chronic lack of sufficient lubrication and moisture in the eye. It is one of the most common problems treated by eye physicians. In dry eye syndrome, the eye doesn't produce enough tears, or the tears have a chemical composition that causes them to evaporate too quickly.

The main purpose of tears is to bathe the eye, wash out dust and debris and keep the eye moist. Tears also contain enzymes that neutralize the microorganisms that colonize the eye. Tears are essential for good eye health.

### **2. What are the symptoms of dry eye syndrome?**

There are many symptoms of dry eye syndrome. Some of the most common symptoms are:

- Persistent Itching, burning and irritation of the eye
- Red eye
- Blurred vision that improves with blinking
- Excessive tearing
- Feeling like something is in your eye
- Increased discomfort after periods of reading, watching TV, or working on a computer

### **3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?**

Leaders with “dry eye syndrome” are leaders who have not kept themselves bathed in the water of the word and the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. They are leaders who have become spiritually dry. When a leader is dry in his own spirit it is very difficult to be visionary.

In addition, dry eye syndrome can be reflective of a leader who has become a bit cynical about life and ministry to others. They cannot cry spiritually anymore because of negative interactions with people.

Staying up to date in our relationship to God on a personal level keeps us plugged into the source of all vision. Walking out a life that is continually “filled with the Holy Spirit” keeps us in touch with the true source of vision.

## **G. Macular Degeneration**

### **1. What is macular degeneration?**

Macular degeneration is a degenerative condition of the macula. The macula is the part of the retina responsible for the sharp, central vision needed to read or drive.

The exact causes of age-related macular degeneration are still unknown. In some cases macular generation may be a result of side effects of prescribed drugs.

2. What are the symptoms of macular degeneration?

Some common symptoms of macular degeneration are:

- blurred vision
- straight lines appear wavy
- central vision loss

3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?

Leaders who exhibit macular degeneration are leaders who have a difficult time staying on their target. These are leaders who have a problem keeping the “main thing, the main thing.” These are leaders who cannot maintain a sharp, central focus. For these leaders all of the lines become wavy.

## **H. Color Blindness**

1. What is color blindness?

Color blindness is a genetic condition characterized by the inability to see certain colors. People with color blindness are unable to see red, green, blue, or mixtures of these colors. Most people with color blindness can see some color. Very few people with color blindness can see no color at all. Males are much more likely to be colorblind than females. Color blindness may lead to additional vision loss or total blindness. Color blindness may be inherited from your parents.

2. What are the symptoms of color blindness?

The primary symptom is an inability to see certain colors or to distinguish between certain colors.

Unfortunately, color blindness cannot be treated. However, some tinted eyeglasses may help colorblind people to see better.

3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?

Leaders can be spiritually color blind. That is there are things that they see clearly, things they see vaguely and things that they do not see at all. Leaders often are color blind in relation to their vision because they do not rely on team ministry and the input of others into their vision development.

No one person can see all aspects of reality. Leaders need those along side of them who will help them to fill out the picture. You could live your whole life color blind and you would not be aware of it unless there were others around you with whom to interact and compare notes.

## **I. Crossed Eyes**

### **1. What is it to have crossed eyes?**

Crossed-eyes is a vision condition in which a person cannot align both eyes simultaneously under normal conditions. One or both of the eyes may turn in, out, up or down. An eye turn may be constant or intermittent. A constant eye is when the eye turns all of the time. An intermittent eye is when the eye turns only some of the time. Intermittent eyes usually turn under stressful situations or when ill.

One of the causes of crossed eyes is unequal pulling of muscles on one side of the eye. Another cause of crossed eyes is a paralysis of the ocular muscles.

### **2. What are the symptoms of having crossed eyes?**

Some common symptoms of crossed-eyes are:

- Eyes that appear crossed
- Eyes that do not align in the same direction
- Uncoordinated eye movements
- Double vision
- Reduced vision in one of the eyes

Treatment involves wearing a patch over one of the eyes, visual exercises, glasses with the correct prescription or bifocal or prism correction to aid in proper focusing, eye drops to help focus, or surgery.

### **3. What does this condition tell us about our leadership vision?**

Leaders with crossed-eyes are leaders who are double minded and who are continually pulled in more than one direction. These leaders seem to have conflicting interests at times and it is easy for them to be distracted. The Bible speaks of having a single eye.

Often the pull of acceptance in the world system, fame and other earthly rewards can pull leaders away from the central commission that God has placed upon them.

## **J. Blindness**

Blindness is obviously the worst case when it comes to vision problems. Jesus accused the Pharisees of being “blind guides” (Mt. 23:16). We can become “blind guides” when our goal ends up being self-fulfillment, self-gratification or the praise of men.

The blind cannot lead the blind (Mt. 15:13-14; Luke 6:39; John 9:1-8).

*But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." Matthew 15:13-14*

## **II. What is the answer to these eye conditions?**

Fortunately, Jesus has the power to heal our blindness (Luke 4:18).

*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind... Luke 4:18*

The key is recognizing that we have a need and seeking our healing from Him (Mt. 20:29-34; John 9:1-8).

*Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. 30 And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" 31 Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" 32 So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 33 They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." 34 So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him. Matthew 20:29-34*

Luke's Gospel says, "Lord, that I may receive my sight" (Luke 18:41).

*Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. 4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. 8 Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" John 9:1-8*

Note to Teacher: Close session by praying for spiritual eye conditions.

## **Lesson 5-6**

### **The Source of Vision**

“A man with the vision of God is not devoted simply to a cause or a particular issue but to God himself.” --Oswald Chambers

#### **I. What are the most common sources of vision?**

There are several common sources from which we can draw our vision. This is true on a personal level and it is also true when it comes to the business or the local church level.

##### **A. Our vision can come from the heart of our parents.**

It is not uncommon for parents to have a wonderful plan for the lives of their children. In fact, children are seen in the Bible as “arrows in the hands of a mighty man” (Ps. 127:4). Who is better suited than parents to give vocational and vision direction to young people?

In addition, the Bible clearly instructs that children are to obey their parents “in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph. 6:1, Mt. 15:4; 19:19).

At what point, however, do we leave father and mother? Jesus challenged His followers that when there was a conflict of interest between what He was saying and what parents may be saying His disciples had to be willing to leave father and mother (Mt. 19:29; Mark 10:29; Luke 14:26).

*Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.” So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.” Mark 10:28-30*

*“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:26*

Even Jesus understood when it was time to be about “His Father’s business” and when it was time to focus on His parents business (Luke 2:48-52).

*So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.” 49 And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” 50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. 51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:48-52*

At some point Jesus had to focus on the will of His Heavenly Father rather than the will of earthly mother and father (John 6:42).

## **B. Our vision can come from cultural expectations.**

There are many pressures that our culture and our society can put on us when it comes to vision. This is true in the personal realm, the business realm and in the realm of building the church.

On the personal side, vocational guidance counselors rarely see the ministry options that could be a part of our future. Guidance is usually given on the basis of earning potential, natural qualification and market demands.

It is easy to allow societal pressure to force us into a certain direction because of what is perceived to be a successful career pursuit.

On the church side of things, society and culture also have certain traditional expectations of the place of the local church and the services that it should offer to a community.

Often the cultural expectations limit the local church to compassion ministries and resist a church's involvement in things that have to do with shaping the political, business or economic aspects of culture.

In addition, we can build a church based on what the world demands rather than on what God demands. We can strive to build the kind of church that appeals to mainstream society rather than focusing on building the kind of church that God would enjoy.

As we search for a comprehensive vision for our lives or the local church, how much are we to play to our culture?

Jesus did not accept the pressure placed on Him by society or the religious leaders to be what they wanted Him to be. John the Baptist did not feel the need to conform his calling and vision to what was pleasing to the crowd or what would have made the people "more comfortable" with his message.

Both Jesus and John recognized they were on a mission from God and they did not have to apologize for the way that mission was expressed or how that message was packaged.

Now this does not mean that we seek to be irrelevant or "out of touch" with society. On the contrary, we are careful to be true to our primary purpose while adjusting our styles to reach the target people.

## **C. Our vision can come from our mentors and leaders.**

Most people are the product of their upbringing. This includes natural parents as well as other spiritual leaders or mentors who have helped to shape who they are as people. Often because we have such a high regard for those who have spoken

into our lives, it is easy for us to simply do what they want us to do or what we know will be pleasing to them.

It is tragically possible for mentoring ministries to use their disciples for the purpose of their own vision fulfillment rather than seeking what is actually in the best interest of the disciple involved.

It is also possible for mentoring ministries to try to squeeze everyone into the same vision and calling that they have had. It is easy for ministries to view their own personal experiences as a model to which other ministries need to conform. This can happen because we all tend to see our experience as a pattern experience.

Another danger that can come out of close mentoring relationships is that grateful disciples can almost feel obligated to follow in the exact footsteps of their mentor. This can restrict the individual from seeking God for their own particular vision from God.

#### **D. Our vision can come from what we have seen in others.**

It is so easy to look at what others are doing and simply try to clone what we see in them. We may observe a ministry model that seems to be having good fruit and adopt their vision as our vision. There can actually be a subtle danger in going to conferences and reading books that propose ministry strategy and vision. After receiving input from such sources we can seek to implement someone else's vision without processing it and making it our own.

This is not to say that our vision cannot come through such observation, but before a vision can become personal, it must be more than a "mirroring" of what is being done by others.

It is valuable to study other ministries and the visions that they have expressed. We can learn a lot from other people. But we must also realize that everyone is different, every situation is different and what God demands from one person is often very different from what He demands from someone else.

#### **E. Our vision can come from our own heart (Jer. 14:14; 23:16, 25-27; 27:9-10).**

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD." Jeremiah 23:16*

It is possible for us to manufacture our own vision based on dreams and aspirations that we have for ourselves. People generate vision statements to motivate themselves that often have to do with career goals, monetary goals or political goals. These goals are often based on reaching for things that will enhance or create a better lifestyle for themselves. These goals can often arise out of three things that come out of our own heart.

##### **1. Personal Ambition**



Our vision may come from a desire to be seen as a success or to have influence over others.

## **2. Competitive Spirit**

Our vision may come from a desire to do better than someone else and it usually arises out of a comparing of oneself with others.

## **3. Desire for Fame, Wealth, Etc.**

Our vision may come from a desire to acquire natural things as it pertains to living a life of comfort and ease.

The problem with all of the visions that have human origin is that they require human effort, human power and human ingenuity to achieve. Unfortunately, we are not smart enough, powerful enough or wise enough to achieve such things. In addition, should we achieve our vision, it may not be a vision that is worthy of achievement.

“Any ambition which centers around and terminates upon oneself is unworthy; while an ambition which has the mission of God as its center is not only legitimate but positively praiseworthy.” –Oswald Chambers

# **II. What is to be the source of our vision?**

## **A. God**

God is the source of everything that is good. God has attributes that help to define how He functions. Our vision needs to reflect Who God is to the world. This means that our vision must be consistent with the moral attributes of God.

1. God is absolutely **holy** (Ps. 22:3; 99:5, 9; Is. 5:16; 6:3; Zeph. 3:5; John 17:11; I Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:8-11).

God cannot sin and He cannot tolerate sin. He is sinless perfection in the strictest sense. Those who want to live with God must also be holy (Amos 3:3). Our vision must line up with the idea of holiness.

*Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool—He is holy.* Psalm 99:5

2. God is and has perfect **love** (Jer. 31:3; John 3:16; I John 4:8, 16; Rom. 5:8; 8:39).

God’s love is of such a nature that it is not self-serving but seeks the improvement of others. This kind of love is demonstrated through the life of Christ. Our vision must line up with God’s idea of love.

3. God is absolutely **faithful** (I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; I Th. 5:24; Deut. 7:7-9).

God is absolutely trustworthy. His faithfulness is manifest in several ways; the following are only two of them.

- a. In keeping His promises (Heb. 10:23).

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

- b. In finishing the work He has started (I Th. 5:23-24).

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*

Our vision must be seen as an expression of faithfulness to God and others.

4. God is absolutely **righteous** and **just** (Deut. 32:4; Ezek. 18:19-30; Ezra 9:15; Ps. 116:5; 145:17; Dan. 9:14; John 17:25; Rev. 15:3).

Holiness has more to do with God's character as He is in Himself, while righteousness and justice have to do with His character as manifested in His dealing with others. Our vision must include the concept of justice in dealing with others.

*He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He. Deuteronomy 32:4*

*The LORD our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. Daniel 9:14*

*Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Revelation 15:3*

5. God is full of **mercy** (Ex. 34:5-7; Ps. 86:5; 103:8; 130:7; 145:8-9; Deut. 4:31).

Mercy is a concept that is similar to that of compassion. God does everything that He does out of a compassion for His creation. Our vision should include the idea of compassion or feeling what other people feel. Compassion was the primary thing that motivated the actions of Jesus.

*For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. Psalm 86:5*

*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. Psalm 103:8*

*O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. Psalm 130:7-8*

## **B. The Word of God**

The source of our vision should be the Word of God. God has given us His word to guide us (Ps. 119:105). As we study the word of God and meditate upon it God instills in us a sense of His will and purpose for our lives. The word of God is the filter for all of our vision as believers. If what we are striving for is not biblical, it is not a goal worthy of our effort.

## **C. The Eternal Purpose of God**

Whatever vision we have it must arise out of the declared purpose of God. God Himself is extremely focused to the degree that everything He does is thoroughly consistent with His Eternal Purpose.

God does not have many purposes, He has one. He does not have many things that He is trying to accomplish; He has one thing that He is working toward. God is very focused and determined. God has mobilized all of the resources of heaven toward that one goal.

1. The purpose of God springs from God's Father's heart. A father's heart has six desires. A father desires:

### **a. A man in His image**

A father's heart desires offspring. It was not good for a God of love to dwell alone. He had a desire to reproduce Himself. This is where the focus on character development fits in.

### **b. Multiplicity of seed**

A father's heart is not satisfied with only one offspring, its desire is for many sons and daughters that would be numbered as the sands of the sea, the dust of the earth and the stars in the sky. This is where evangelism and reaching out to the lost fits in.

### **c. Maturity**

A father's heart also desires for that offspring to come to a place of maturity in responsibility, wisdom and judgment. This is where discipleship and bringing people to full maturity fits in.

### **d. Relationship**

A father's heart longs for the day when his children will not only be his offspring but his friends who can enter into a close relationship with him. This is where living a life of prayer, praise and worship fits in.

### **e. Partnership**

A father's heart desires to enter into a working partnership with his offspring. God's job is to rule and reign the universe. He desires His kids to sit with Him in His throne. This is where entering into the full expressions of our ministry and spiritual warfare fit in.

**f. Bride for His Son**

A father's heart desires a bride for the only-begotten son. This must be a bride who measures up to the measure of the stature of the Son who is being married. This is where the deepening of relationship and intimacy with God fits in.

The purpose of God can be summarized with the following statement:

*The Purpose of God is to have a many-membered man in the image of God who will qualify for rulership and dominion and for the honor of being eternally linked with the Son as one flesh.*

2. It is in the church that this mystery of God's purpose will ultimately be fulfilled. It is in the church that this many-sided wisdom will be manifest.
  - a. The Church is the Body (Eph. 4), that new creation in the image of God.
  - b. The Church is the Temple (Eph. 2) that place of communion and relationship with the father.
  - c. The Church is the Family of God (Eph. 3) which is composed of many sons and daughters all bearing the family likeness.
  - d. The Church is the Army (Eph. 6) that walks in authority and dominion over the enemies of God's purpose.
  - e. The Church is the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5) that will one day be eternally united in marriage with the only begotten Son of God.

God's Eternal Purpose has never changed and it never will change. It has progressively been unfolded throughout the generations that have gone before and we will pass the torch to the generations to follow.

Our vision and purpose have meaning when they line up with what God is doing.

**D. Christ's Vision of the Church**

*"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:18-19*

As was seen in the previous point, it is through the Church that God is going to see His Eternal Purpose come to fulfillment. Jesus declared His vision to build

the Church. If our vision is to have meaning, we must tie into what Christ is doing in and through the Church.

Identifying with Christ's purpose in and through the Church is more than becoming a believer and reading your Bible. It involves become personally established in the local expression of the church. This means that we must be those that seek to build the local church into what God intended for it to be.

If we are members of a church with other employment, we use that employment to foster the same purpose as our local church. If we are leading the local church we must be sure that our local vision is consistent with God's overall vision for the church.

Building God's House God's way is the only way to ensure His involvement in what we are doing and success in our endeavor (Ps. 127:1).

*Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.*

#### **E. Christ's Commission**

Christ was very clear about what His disciples were to focus on when He left the earth and went back to heaven. Whatever He told those early disciples extends to us as well not just those who are employees of a local church. Jesus' instructions to His disciples upon his departure can be summarized as follows:

1. Preaching the Gospel to every creature and every nation under heaven (Mark 13:10; 16:15; Luke 24:47).

*And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15*

2. Witnessing of Christ to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

3. Bringing healing and deliverance to all those in such need (Mark 16:16-18).

*And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*

4. Baptizing all those who respond to the Gospel (Mt. 28:19).

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. Matthew 28:18-20*

5. Making disciples out of all those who were converted (Mt. 28:19).
6. Teaching the converted a lifestyle of obedience to all of God’s commands (Mt. 28:20).
7. Tending the converted as a shepherd (John 21:15-20).

All of these elements are the essence of evangelism. Someone is not truly evangelized until they are settled in the faith, committed to a local church and functioning in their God-ordained gifts.

All of these elements must be found in any organization that would like to call itself a church of Jesus Christ. All of these elements must be in our vision or our vision is not consistent with God’s vision.

#### **F. Your Individual Design**

Another source from which we can develop our vision is the understanding of who we are and how we have been made (Ps. 139:13-17). Part of the process of defining vision involves taking a good look at ourselves.

When God made us, He made us with purpose in mind. He had that purpose in mind when He designed everything about us including our:

1. Emotions
2. Abilities and Aptitudes
3. Intellectual Abilities (IQ)
4. Stature and Appearance
5. Heritage and Genealogy

Any unchangeable attribute that we possess must be seen as part of God’s positioning and equipment for fulfilling the good work that He has in mind for us to do.

In addition, He has given us spiritual gifts and stirred up personal passions that make us who we are.

#### **G. Your Individual Calling**

There is a “will of God” to which we have all been called (Col. 1:1, 8-9; 4:12). Discovering this “will of God” will help us to determine our vision.

Note: For more teaching on discovering your life purpose, refer to the course **Life Management I** which goes into much detail on this theme.

Key verses that deal with our calling as believers:

1. John 15:16

*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

This verse teaches that...

- God chose us with a purpose in mind that we would bear fruit.
- God has appointed us to accomplish a certain work.
- God's intention is that our work will live on after us (significance).
- God is going to help us fulfill the work because it will be bigger than we are.

2. Acts 20:22-24

*And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

This verse teaches that...

- We have a personal race to run.
- There are obstacles and challenges to completing our race.
- We must maintain focus, avoid distractions and be willing to pay the price of success.
- God has a plan for our lives—the will of God (Col. 1:1, 9; 4:12).

3. Colossians 1:9-11

*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of **His will** in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...*

You cannot walk worthy of the Lord unless you know His will.

### **III. What is to be the result of our vision?**

If our vision is based on the right foundation and is centered directly in the will and purpose of God it will have the following outcomes:

A. Lost people will get rightly connected to God (Phil. 2:9-11).

B. The Kingdom of God will be extended in the earth in all spheres of influence.

- C. A strong, vibrant, flourishing, glorious and victorious church will emerge (Eph. 5:27).
- D. Individuals will find significance, purpose and meaning in their lives (II Th. 1:11-12).
- E. The Eternal Purpose of God will be realized.
- F. God will in all things be glorified (I Cor. 10:31; I Pet. 4:11).

*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*  
I Corinthians 10:31

*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* I Peter 4:11



## Lesson 7

### Receiving a Vision

#### I. Why is it so important to receive a vision?

A. There are things that characterize people with no vision.

Proverbs 29:18a describes the condition of people who do not have a vision.

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

Other translations:

...the people cast off restraint... --NKJV

...they run wild... --NLT

...a people [is] made naked... --YLT

...they stumble all over themselves... --MSG

...people break loose... --Moffatt

...the people are unrestrained... --NAS

...the people shall be scattered abroad... Douay

The Hebrew word translated “perish” in this verse means “to cause or show lack of restraint or to let loose restraints” (BDB).

1. They are aimless in their pursuits.
2. They are undisciplined in their lifestyle.
3. They tend to remain stagnant in their faith level.
4. They end up with very little fruit at the end of their life.

Amos described the condition of God’s people who did not find the word of the Lord.

*“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it. In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst.” Amos 8:11-13*

The word translated “wander” in the passage means “to quiver, totter, shake, reel, stagger, wander, move, wave, waver, tremble” (BDB).

B. There are things that characterize people with vision.

1. They have direction.
2. They are motivated.
3. They have a sense of significance.

4. They grow from faith to faith.
5. They sense that their life has value, worth and meaning.
6. They experience a sense of accomplishment.
7. They have an adventurous life (Dan. 11:32b). They are risk-takers who enter into reward (no risk, no reward).

*...but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.*

C. There are several conditions of a person that will affect vision fulfillment.

1. Some people have no relationship with Jesus Christ and, therefore, cannot receive a vision from God (Eph. 4:17-18). They are spiritually blind.

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart...*

The natural man lives life as if there was nothing beyond his physical life (I Pet. 4:1-6). As a result this person's vision will be based on the wrong things.

- a. This person is primarily concerned about physical and material things.
- b. This person does not live with a sense of accountability to a higher being.
- c. This person's values are temporal and earthly.
- d. This person lives in the seen rather than the unseen world (II Cor. 4:18).

*...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

- e. This person does not believe that there are moral absolutes or standards.
2. Some people are believers who live only for themselves and are not concerned about God's vision for their life (Jam. 4:3-4).

*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:3-4*

The Bible calls these people carnal Christians (Rom. 8:7; I Cor. 3:1-4). These individuals live a life that is well beneath where they could be living.

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until*

*now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? I Corinthians 3:1-3*

Carnal believers behave like “mere men.” Other translations say:

*...you are living on the purely human level of your lower nature... --NEB*

*You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord. --NLT*

*...are you not worldly-minded and do you not behave like the unconverted...  
--Berkley*

3. Some people are believers who have received a vision, but they have not been obedient to that vision (Acts 26:19b).

*...I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.*

4. Some people are believers who have received a vision, but do not know how to fulfill it (or they have tried and failed for whatever reason).

All of these first four classifications of individuals represent people who are “perishing” in relation to their life purpose.

Fortunately, there is a fifth type of individual...

5. Some people are believers who have received a vision from God, they have embraced the vision of God and they are working to fulfill the vision that they have received.

## **II. How does one receive a vision?**

In answering this question it is important that we keep in mind our last lesson when we discussed the source of vision. The fact that God is the source of vision implies that we do not create our own vision, but we must receive it from God.

Remember, we do not originate or visualize a vision; we perceive and receive a vision that originates from and is given by God.

John the Baptist said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven” (John 3:27).

Even though this is true, we do have a part to play in the process. We can position ourselves or posture ourselves to receive a vision from the Lord. We position ourselves by cultivating certain qualities in our life.

A. We must have general things in order in our lives.

1. This includes a separation from the world system (II Cor. 6:11-18; I John 2:15-17).

The thinking of the world system is so diametrically opposed to God's thinking that it is difficult to be saturated in that system and be open to hearing from God.

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. I John 2:15-17*

2. This includes an attitude of humility before the Lord (Ps. 18:27; 25:9; Pro. 11:2; Mt. 5:3; I Pet. 5:5-6).

*The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way.*

Psalm 25:9

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:3

3. This includes a life of prayer.

Many people in the Bible heard from God or received a vision from the Lord while in prayer.

- a. Hannah (I Sam. 1:12)
- b. Daniel (Dan. 9:20-21)
- c. Peter (Acts 11:5)
- d. Paul (Acts 9:11)
- e. John (Rev. 1:10)

4. This includes meditation on the word of God (Ps. 119:105, 130; Jam. 1:21).

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105*

*The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

Psalm 119:130

5. This includes walking in the light that we have (obedience).

God's plan tends to be progressive in nature. We move from glory to glory (II Cor. 3:18). What we have been given to do now prepares us for what is yet to come.

6. This includes embracing the Eternal Purpose of God and Christ's Commission (See previous lesson).

#### B. We must seek the Lord for vision.

1. This means that we must have an open heart (I Sam. 3:9).

*Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'"*

2. This means that we must have a willing spirit (Is. 1:19).

*If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land...*

3. This means we must have a desire to do God's will (Ps. 40:8).

*I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.*

4. This means that we must be serious before the Lord (Jer. 29:11-13).

*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

5. This means we must ask God to reveal Himself and His plans to us (John 16:24; Eph. 1:15-19).

*Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. John 16:24*

*Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power...*

Ephesians 1:15-19

*I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people.*

Ephesians 1:18, NLT

- a. We wait on the Lord for vision (Lam 3:25).

*The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.*

- b. We write down what we perceive the Lord is saying (Hab. 2:2).

*Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.*

- c. We seek confirmation from our spiritual leaders (Pro. 15:22).

*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. –NIV*

C. We will often be stirred to vision by other external factors.

1. This can happen through direct prophetic words (Acts 22:11-16; 13:1-4).
2. This can happen as we listen to the preaching and teaching of God's word (Luke 24:32).
3. This can happen through counsel with spiritual leaders.
4. This can happen through reading the biographies of great leaders.
5. This can happen by association with visionary leaders.
6. This can happen by God breaking our hearts over a particular need or people.

Nehemiah wept over Jerusalem (Neh. 1:4).

7. This can happen when reading about other churches and their visions.

## Lesson 8

### Characteristics of a Vision from God

#### I. What does Habakkuk 2:2-3 teach us about vision?

*Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."*

Other translations of the verse:

*Then the LORD told me: "I will give you my message in the form of a vision. Write it clearly enough to be read at a glance. At the time I have decided, my words will come true. You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting-- it will happen!" –CEV*

*Then the LORD said to me, "Write my answer in large, clear letters on a tablet, so that a runner can read it and tell everyone else. But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed." –NLT*

*And then GOD answered: "Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming--it can hardly wait! And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time." –Msg*

From the reading of these verses in the various translations, we can glean the following principles regarding a vision from God.

#### A. When God speaks to us it is important to write down what He says.

The word that is translated "write" in this passage means "record, engrave, inscribe or write." It usually referred to an inscription that was made on wood, metal or stone.

*Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run." –NAS*

*And the Lord gave me an answer, and said, "Put the vision in writing and make it clear on stones, so that the reader may go quickly." –Bible in Basic English*

The reason God wanted the prophet to write down the message rather than just tell the people the message was so "that it might be read over and over and that it may remain and be of use in times to come" (Gill).

Putting something down in writing is a way of giving substance to the things we hope for. It is a way of committing and binding ourselves to it. Unless we write it down, our vision remains something of a dream, an idea or a fantasy that can be

changed or forgotten too easily. Writing the vision down forces us to take it more seriously.

- B. When God speaks to us it is important to write down what He says in a significant and somewhat permanent way.

The prophet was instructed to write the vision on tablets. Writing on tablets is reminiscent of the writing of God on the tables of stone in the Old Testament (Ex. 31:18).

*Then as the LORD finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God.*

This is more than just the jotting down of a note on a scrap of paper on our desk. This is more than just putting that note in a pile with a lot of other notes.

- C. When God speaks to us it is important to write down what He says in a way that others can easily and quickly read it.

The Geneva Bible says that the prophet was to “write it in great letters.”

Jamison Fausset and Brown states that the idea here in making it plain is to write in large, legible characters as they would “upon boxwood tables covered with wax, on which national affairs were engraved with an iron pen, and then hung up in public, at the prophets’ own houses, or at the temple, that those who passed might read them.”

It is almost the equivalent of putting them high on billboards.

What does this imply for a personal vision, a business vision or a church vision? If people are going to engage our vision quickly it must be written and displayed in a prominent place so that people can understand the vision and engage the vision.

People need to be able to catch the vision while they are on the run.

Gill states in his *Exposition of the Entire Bible* that the vision is to be made plain so that people might “run through the whole without any difficulty, without making any stop, being written in such large capital letters; and those cut so well, and made so plain, that a man might run it over at once with ease, or even read it as he was running; nor need he stop his pace, or stand to read” (Gill).

- D. When God speaks He has His own timeframe for the fulfillment or the achievement of that vision.

1. It will not necessarily be our timeframe.
2. It may seem to be delayed in coming to fruition.
3. It will require patient endurance on our part to become a reality.



- E. When God speaks a vision, God will do His part in making that vision come to pass (Is. 46:9-11; 55:8-11).

*Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure," Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it. Isaiah 46:9-11*

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:8-11*

## **II. What are some of the common characteristics of a vision from God?**

### **A. A vision from God will be prophetic in nature.**

As such a vision from God does not reflect the way things are at the present time, but the way things could be and (hopefully) will be. Any vision implies a movement from the present to the future, from where things are to where we want them to be.

### **B. A vision from God will require focus.**

In order to accomplish any vision it will require making discriminating choices. This means that activities will have to be filtered through the vision and choices will have to be made. We all live in a world of limited resources. We will have to choose between the good, the better and the best. Activities that are good within themselves but are not consistent with our vision will have to be cut away.

### **C. A vision from God will require faith and risk.**

The word "faith" carries with it the idea of risk. The word "faith" is a much more spiritual word than that of "risk." However, people who achieve vision are people who know how to step out in faith and know when it is time to take a risk.

In one sense everything that we do requires some risk. Often, however, the word "risk" is seen as the opposite of "safe." But how safe is it just to sit and do nothing for fear of failure or loss.

Jesus encouraged a certain amount of risk taking when it came to the parable of the talents. He gave the original talents to three men who he expected would take measured risks with them to bring about an increase.

While risk is often thought of in negative terms, it also has a positive side. In some spheres an intelligent risk can reap a huge payoff or reward. You notice I said “intelligent risk.” There are such things as stupid risks that no one should ever take.

#### **D. A vision from God will require boldness.**

Boldness is an outcome of faith. Bold acts will be required to step out of our comfort zone. Fulfilling our vision will require bold steps, bold encounters, bold asking, bold confrontations, bold presentations and bold solicitation.

It is difficult to follow someone who is not bold about their own aspirations or vision. Other synonyms for “bold” are “brave, undaunted, valiant, courageous, fearless, daring, spirited and intrepid.” Antonyms for “bold” include “cowardly, timid, flinching, shrinking, recoiling and chickenhearted.”

Boldness is not a natural tendency, but without it we cannot possibly fulfill the vision that God has placed in our hearts. It takes boldness to step out in new areas of endeavor. It takes boldness to go against the flow. It takes boldness to go where no one has gone before.

#### **E. A vision from God will always have a price tag.**

1. There is always a cost for a vision.

Your vision may be to build a tower. If so, Jesus’ advice was that you had better count the cost (Luke 14:28-30).

*For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it--lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.”*

2. The cost for vision always involves some sort of sacrifice.

Sacrifice includes within it the idea of self-denial. To fulfill vision you will have to deny yourself legitimate pleasures. This will affect many things. It will affect the home you choose to live in, the car you choose to drive and the clothes you choose to wear. All of these things can support or pull against vision fulfillment.

3. The sacrifice always involves a giving of resources to the cause.

This includes the resources of time and money. This means that we have to be willing to channel our limited resources toward a specified goal.

**F. A vision from God will require a significant investment of time.**

Achieving vision is not a casual pursuit. It is not achieved in the “open spaces” of our lives. It must be something around which our other activities revolve. It requires daily attention.

**G. A vision from God will utilize every talent and positive attribute that I possess.**

If we believe that God made us with purpose in mind (and we do), then it stands to reason that everything about us was constructed by God with that purpose in mind. This means that as I walk out God’s vision and purpose it will require all of me, not just some of me.

Many people live their lives unfulfilled because their gifts and abilities are not being challenged. It is likely that they are in the wrong place unless they are simply at a formative stage of the vision.

**H. A vision from God will require planning and strategy.**

A vision from God will not be achieved by accident. The person who fails to plan, plans to fail. The thoughts that we have received from the Lord have to be translated to strategy.

**I. A vision from God will be bigger than you think.**

God’s vision is always very challenging. In fact, when first confronted with God’s vision for our lives the first response will be “Who am I?” The first response will be to count ourselves out of God’s vision or to excuse ourselves. We excuse ourselves because we are all too familiar with our natural weaknesses and deficiencies.

But the truth is God knows what He is doing. God always calls us to something that is bigger than ourselves. He does this because He knows that it can be a reality if,

1. We see God as our partner (Eph. 3:20-21).

*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

With God all things are possible (Luke 1:37; 18:27).

*For with God nothing will be impossible.* Luke 1:37

*But He said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”* Luke 18:27

2. We continue to grow along the way.

We cannot look at ourselves the way we are now and determine what we can do and what we cannot do. We will grow into our vision as we continue to allow God to work in our lives. If we stop our progress in God, our vision may be impossible. However, if we continue to walk humbly before the Lord He will increase our capacity.

3. We include others in our vision.

**J. A vision from God will necessitate the involvement of others.**

The vision that God gives is rarely for you and you alone. In fact, God expects that we will enlist the help of others. Involving others in our vision is not selfish on our part, it is wise. The involvement of others in our vision is good for us and it is good for them. It is good for them if we see ourselves as mentors to others who are growing in the vision that God has for them. In addition, there are those who find their vision wrapped up in the vision of another.

Timothy was wrapped up in Paul's vision. Elisha was wrapped up in Elijah's vision. Joshua was wrapped up in Moses' vision. There did come a time for each of these support ministries to launch out on their own, but they never felt "used" or "abused" by those who mentored them.

**K. A vision from God will require persistence.**

Any vision that is worth living and dying for will be challenged and opposed by certain natural and spiritual forces. There will be natural circumstances that will present formidable obstacles to vision fulfillment. In addition, there will be people and spiritual forces that will seek to thwart your purpose. These obstacles must be overcome and these forces must be resisted.

Opposition to the vision is not a single event in the development of vision. It is something that has to be faced every step of the way. It is he who endures to the end that reaches the goal and wins the prize.

**L. A vision from God will always bring transformation.**

God's vision always works for improvement and brings positive change. It brings positive transformation to individuals, cities, nations, economies and politics. Vision fosters change from the way things are to the way things can and should be.

**M. A vision from God takes a lifetime to complete.**

"Retirement" is not in God's vocabulary. Paul was not able to say that He finished his course until just prior to his martyrdom (II Tim. 4:6-8).

*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have*

*kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

The Psalmist said, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Ps. 150:6). As long as we are alive we will be living for vision and glorifying God with our life.

## Lesson 9-11

### The Qualities of a Vision Achiever

“Any ambition which centers around and terminates upon oneself is unworthy, while an ambition which has the mission of God as its center is not only legitimate but positively praiseworthy.” –Oswald Sanders

#### **I. What are some common characteristics of vision achievers?**

Not everyone who receives a vision achieves their vision. Often there are good reasons why one’s vision is never accomplished. It is good to challenge ourselves with some of the characteristics of those who are more likely to achieve vision. This is done not for the purpose of making us feel bad, but for the purpose of taking a look inside of ourselves and making the needed adjustments so that we can indeed become vision achievers.

#### **A. Vision achievers know what their place is and what they are suppose to do (Pro. 27:8).**

*Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home.*

A bird that strays from its nest is a bird “that flies from place to place, whereby she is exposed to all the arts of fowlers, and to birds of prey...So is he who through vanity or lightness changes his abode, or his calling.”

–John Wesley’s Explanatory Notes

Earlier we talked about the call from God and how important it is to identify our personal mission. Jesus knew that He was to be about His Father’s business (Luke 2:49). What is the Father’s business for you? What is it that you “must be about?”

“You may get to the very top of the ladder and find it has not been leaning against the right wall.” –A. Raine

The English word business means “pursuit, occupation or calling.”

Knowing the Father’s business for you comes from several things.

1. It comes from knowing the responsibility that has been given to you by God.
2. It comes from understanding the grace that is upon your life.
3. It comes from perceiving your level of faith.
4. It comes from an honest evaluation of your gifting.

Paul gives a great summary of this in Romans 12:1-8.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the*

*renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. 4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:1-8, NIV*

**B. Vision achievers know how to distinguish between fantasy and reality (Heb. 13:9).**

While vision achievers are people of faith and visionary in nature, they are also people who have their feet firmly planted on the ground.

1. They are not those who are sucked into every new or novel trend (Eph. 4:14).

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

2. They are not those who are enticed by get-rich-schemes (I Tim. 6:9-10).

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

3. They are those who live by principles and do not compromise their principles for the sake of empty dreams.

**C. Vision achievers have the ability to focus (Mt. 6:24; I Cor. 15:58; Jam. 1:6-8).**

“You cannot be anything if you want to be everything.” –Solomon Schechter

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24*

Later we will see that the ability to change or adapt is good, but continually changing one's focus it is not a positive trait of vision achievers (Pro. 24:21-22).

*My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those given to change; for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin those two can bring?*

This verse is most likely talking about changing your allegiance from the Lord and the king to other leaders in rebellion, but it certainly has relevance when we talk about changing vision often. The more you jump from vision to vision the less likely any of those visions will become a reality.

**D. Vision achievers have the ability to discipline themselves to stay on focus (Ps. 90:12).**

*So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

*Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom. –NLT*

“Maturity is revealed by what I do with my free time.” –Bill Gothard

Vision achievers organize all of the areas of their life in such a way that everything is moving in the same direction and contributing to the same purpose. This includes the disciplines of time, money, energy, diet, exercise, recreation and all other aspects of their life.

**E. Vision achievers love the idea of a challenge.**

Vision achievers are not put off by the fact that something is going to be difficult to accomplish. On the contrary, vision achievers have a “Caleb Spirit” that is actually energized by the challenge. They want the best land, they understand about the giants that inhabit that land, but they are not going to be intimidated.

*Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: “You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. 8 Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. 9 So Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.’ 10 And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. 11 As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. 12 Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said.” Joshua 14:6-12*

Note: Caleb was 85 years old when he made these statements. He was more than 20 years older than anyone else (besides Joshua) going in to possess the land.

**F. Vision achievers are constant learners.**



Henry Ford once said:

“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.”

There are many different ways for vision achievers to learn and to keep on learning.

### **1. They learn from study.**

This involves getting into the books and keeping current in the world of learning and technology as it relates to your field of endeavor (I Tim. 2:15; 4:13-16). It may involve seasonal enrollment in courses that will further enhance their levels of competence.

*Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. I Timothy 4:13-16*

### **2. They learn from observation.**

This involves learning from others (Heb. 13:7). Others are engaged in pursuits that are similar to yours. A vision achiever is someone who is interested in what others are doing and understands that they do not always need to personally originate everything that they do (reinvent the wheel).

*Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Hebrews 13:7*

### **3. They learn from experience.**

This involves being careful to learn from and evaluate every experience that we have with the idea of learning something from it. We all have positive and negative experiences. We can learn something from each of them. However, we will only learn from them if we do not try to make excuses for our mistakes, blame others for our mistakes, or insist that we never make mistakes.

### **4. They learn from correction (Heb. 12:5-11).**

This involves being able to receive both positive and negative criticism from others. It involves the ability to receive both encouragement and rebuke. Vision achievers not only receive correction, they invite it and embrace it.

- a. Vision achievers are those who are able to receive criticism without hard feelings (Pro. 27:5-6).

*Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

Proverbs 27:5-6

*A truly good friend will openly correct you. You can trust a friend who corrects you, but kisses from an enemy are nothing but lies. –CEV*

- b. Vision achievers are those who can discuss a point of difference without hostility (Pro. 27:17).

*As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

- c. Vision achievers are those who have the humility to readily admit when they are wrong.

What is said about the Scripture can be applied to many words of correction from others.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

II Timothy 3:16-17

**G. Vision achievers are willing to sacrifice present comfort for long-term gain (I Cor. 9:24-25).**

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. I Corinthians 9:24-25*

These sacrifices may involve limiting one's lifestyle so that resources can be directed toward vision. It may mean paying for a university course instead of a new car. It may involve foregoing entertainment options for the sake of making time for further preparation.

Vision achievers understand the principle of sowing and reaping. There may be a "sowing in tears," but there will eventually be "reaping in joy." They understand that what you reap is directly proportional to what you have sown (II Cor. 9:6).

The early stages of vision development usually require much greater commitment and much deeper sacrifice (starting a church or business).

**H. Vision achievers are able to adapt and change.**

- 1. Those who embrace change are those who understand that they cannot anticipate everything from the beginning.

Only God can do this (Is. 46:9-10).

*And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God--I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me. Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. –NLT*

Since you do not have God's capability to anticipate the future, if you are going achieve vision you must be able to adjust what you are doing "on the fly" or while you are going forward. It is just like flying a space craft to the moon (something I do often). At various stages along the way there needs to be small course adjustments.

2. Those who embrace change are those who understand that vision involves a series of progressive revelations (Is. 28:13).

The longer we walk with the Lord the more perfect our understanding of His will and His purposes becomes. We rarely get a full understanding of every aspect of God's vision at the outset. God knows that if He showed us everything at the beginning, it might be more than we could absorb. Often as we go forward God opens further revelation and understanding and with that new doors of opportunity for us to walk through.

3. Those who embrace change are those who can distinguish the means from the end.
  - a. The "end" is the ultimate goal or purpose.
  - b. The "means" is the vehicle, method or instrument employed to get to that end.

We learned in relation to God Eternal Purpose that God's instruments may change but His purpose remains the same. This is the same with us in many cases. The flexible part of the vision is the methods or the means and we must be able to be open to creativity in this regard.

4. Those who embrace change are those who are able to re-invent themselves every few years (See the next point).

#### **I. Vision achievers are able to stay relevant to the culture and the times.**

To some degree vision achievers must be students of culture. They need to understand the world in which they live. They need to adapt their styles and methods to the characteristics of their target audiences. We cannot ignore the learning styles and the information gathering methods of the present generation. We are all living in a cultural context. We must be able to speak the language of the people that we are trying to reach.

#### **J. Vision achievers have trained their mouths to speak words of faith (Mark 11:23; Pro. 6:2; Rom. 10:8-13).**

*So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. Mark 11:22-24*

Obviously, the ability to speak such words of faith is based on hearing and knowing the things that God has said concerning you and your vision. When we know that we have heard from God, a strong component of the walk of faith is our confession of faith.

*You are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth. Proverbs 6:2*

**K. Vision achievers are able to make bold decisions (I Kgs. 18:21).**

*And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.*

Other translations:

*How long are you going to waver between two opinions? –NLT*

*How long will you go limping between two sides? –ASV*

*How much longer will you try to have things both ways? –CEV*

*How long will you straddle the issue? –NAB*

*How long are you going to sit on the fence? –Msg*

Vision achievers cannot be indecisive in their decision making process. There is a difference between a bold decision and a "rash" decision. A rash decision is made quickly and emotionally without all of the information needed to make the decision. A bold decision is an informed decision, a difficult decision, a decision with a certain amount of risk that others are hesitant or fearful to make.

"Maturity is the ability to make a decision and stand by it. The immature spend their lives exploring endless possibilities, then do nothing." –Emerson

**L. Vision achievers are able to motivate others to join them in the work.**

In other words, vision achievers are team players.

1. They are able to do this because they know that they need others to fulfill their vision.
2. They are able to do this because they realize their personal limitations and that they cannot "do it all." In other words, they have an honest evaluation of themselves.
3. They are able to do this because they have a high regard for and place a high value on people.

4. They are able to do this because they understand and celebrate diversity within people (not everyone has to be just like them). They staff their weakness.

#### **M. Vision achievers are willing to invest in people.**

Vision achievers realize that people are the most valuable asset that they have in accomplishing their vision. They realize that a constant turnover of personnel is not conducive to vision fulfillment. They realize that when you invest in people and families you invoke the blessing of God on your endeavors (Pro. 11:24-25). They understand that many people can find their own vision fulfillment within the context of your vision when the conditions are right.

*There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.*

#### **N. Vision achievers draw strength from other vision achievers.**

The Bible is clear that we are greatly influenced and affected by the people with whom we fellowship (I Cor. 15:33). It indicates that we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). The more you associate with people of vision the more visionary you become.

*Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."* I Corinthians 15:33

The opposite of this verse is also true, "Good company inspires good character." So the admonition is to "hang out with good characters."

#### **O. Vision achievers turn obstacles into opportunities.**

Vision achievers have the ability to see the opportunity in every crisis (the silver lining in every cloud). They are optimistic by nature.

<b>Optimist</b>	<b>Pessimist</b>
Sees the Silver Lining	Sees the Cloud
Sees the Donut	Sees the Holes
Glass is Half Full	Glass is Half Empty
Sees the Potential	Sees the Problems
Anticipates the Best	Believes the Worst
Expect Things to Succeed	Expect Things to Fail
Laughs to forget	Forgets to laugh
Says, "Good morning Lord!"	Says "Good Lord, its morning!"
Happy	Depressing
Healthy	Unhealthy

"Both optimists and pessimists contribute to our society. The optimist invents the airplane and the pessimist the parachute." –Gil Stern

“Pessimists believe that things are generally bad and that they can become even worse. They feel that when bad things happen it’s permanent and that it will always persist and affect their life. The core of a pessimist’s attitude is helplessness and that nothing they do will make a difference, so why even try.

“Optimists believe that the world is a positive place, that setbacks are temporary, that problems are challenges to overcome, and that each individual plays an active part in what happens in his/her life. Optimistic people have fewer infectious diseases, stronger immune systems, overall better health habits, and live longer.”

–Amy Sherman

There are at least six reasons why vision achievers are able to be optimistic and see the opportunities around them. It is not just the “power of positive thinking.”

1. They are able to do this because they believe God is in control of their lives (Rom. 8:28). As a result they do not panic under stress.

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

2. They are able to do this because they do not seek to identify who or what to blame for their troubles (others, circumstances, God, Satan, etc.).
3. They are able to do this because they focus on solutions rather than on problems.
4. They are able to do this because they are people of faith who believe nothing that has been birthed in God is impossible (mountains can be moved).
5. They are able to do this because they have a “not-a-problem” and a “can-do” attitude.
6. They are able to do this because they have the ability to adapt and change to new situations. They are flexible not stubborn.

The following is an article that emphasizes the importance of seizing opportunities even when they are packaged as trouble.

### **Seizing Opportunity by Giovanni Coratolo**

Today’s news reporters are littered with depressing stories about the economy: mortgage crisis, gas prices, and foreclosures are increasing while housing values are plummeting.

As a former small business owner of 30 years I often wonder how I would have operated my businesses under the current economic conditions in light of the constant negative drum beats. So I Googled “managing your business in a downturn”. What I received was a lot free advice.

Most of the articles the search yielded told me to sharpen my pencil, cut out unnecessary spending, and to make sure you were taking care of your customers. Well the business school I came from taught me to do this during good times or bad. Why must you wait for a business downturn to decide to run your business based on good management?

I was amazed at the majority of the recommendations that suggested that I should look inward in order to survive rather than looking externally for opportunity. In every economy, good or bad, there are going to be winners and losers. I truly believe that the winners will see opportunity where others will sit and wait for the dark clouds to blow over.

Today, I was fortunate to meet with four of our U.S. Chamber members that were selected by the White House to tell their story to President Bush of how they seized the opportunities afforded them by the business provisions of the recently passed economic stimulus package. Do you know the one thing they all have in common? They were optimistic, forward thinkers that have not let the negative news dampen their entrepreneurial energy to capitalize on innovative ways to grow their businesses and make money. Each one of these business owners were bubbling over with enthusiasm and confidence. All of them were telling stories of growing and expanding their businesses and hiring new workers. When I left the room I found myself wondering if they were reading the same newspapers I was.

**P. Vision achievers have the patience to wait for the vision to be realized.**

We have to go back to Habakkuk's reminder, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:2-3).

*I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.*

Psalm 40:1

**Q. Vision achievers have a sense of accountability to God and others.**

Ultimately we will all have to give an account to God for what He has given to us. We are stewards of His gifts and graces (I Pet. 4:10). Vision achievers live their life in an awareness that we belong to the Lord, everything we have comes from God and He expects us to utilize it for His glory.

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. I Peter 4:10*

**II. What are some of the obstacles to vision that vision achievers overcome?**

Note that there are at least eight opponents of faith or vision:

**A. The Voice of Satan**

Satan will always seek to get us to doubt those things that the Lord has spoken to us. He will always put a question mark on the word of God. When he first

approached Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he challenged what God said to them with the statement, “Has God indeed said?” (Gen. 3:1).

When Satan tempted Jesus after His spectacular baptism he challenged what God had spoken over Jesus about His sonship when he said, “If you are the Son of God...” (Mt. 4:3).

It is important for us to understand that Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). We need to treat his voice the same way that Jesus did when He said “Get behind me, Satan!” (Luke 4:8). We can never let the voice of Satan shape our vision.

## **B. Mental Doubts or Worry**

We can have doubts just like Peter when he stepped out of the boat and on to the water. He was fine until he began to doubt that he could really do what he was in fact doing. He looked at the circumstances and began to analyze what he was doing from a natural perspective and he lost faith. He began to doubt that the Word of the Lord could sustain him (Mt. 14:24:32). When we try to figure out everything that God reveals and understand it from a human point of view we open ourselves up to doubt.

*But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. 25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” 28 And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” 29 So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!” 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Matthew 14:24-32*

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:5-8*

Interesting facts about worry:

- 40% of the things you worry about will never happen.
- 30% of the things you worry about couldn't be changed by all the worrying in the world.
- 12% of your worries are needless worries about your health.
- 10% of your worries are about petty, miscellaneous things.
- 8% of your worries are about real and legitimate concerns. In other words,



- 92% of your worrying is a complete waste of time.

“The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.”  
–Franklin Roosevelt

### **C. Discouragement**

When things do not go as planned or they do not happen according to our schedule it is easy to get discouraged.

This is why one of the most often repeated challenges in the Bible is to “be strong and very courageous” (See: Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:2-9; I Chr. 28:20; II Chr. 15:7).

*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave or forsake you.*  
Deuteronomy 31:6

Discouragement is the opposite of courage. Courage is the quality of mind that meets danger or opposition with calmness and firmness. It is the ability to be unshaken in the face of danger.

### **D. Overwhelming Circumstances**

When we face obstacles that seem to be much stronger than we are our faith is challenged just like that of the children of Israel when they faced the Red Sea, the giants in the land or Goliath of Gath. These circumstances can lead us to be fearful or full of fear which is the opposite of faithful or full of faith.

### **E. Physical Weaknesses or Inadequacies**

When we start looking at ourselves and seeing how frail and weak we really are it is easy to lose faith. Just like Moses when he said “Who am I?” or “I am not eloquent” (Ex. 3:11; 4:10). Or when Jeremiah said “I am but a youth” (Jer. 1:6).

### **F. Lack of Financial Provision and Resources**

When we see how much money our vision is going to take and we see how little we really have it is easy to shrink back. The problem is that we forget that God has said that all of the gold is His and all of the silver is His (Hag. 2:8). Compared to God, even the richest man in the world is a poor man.

### **G. Past Failure and Unforgiveness**

Sometimes our past experiences of failure can keep us from pursuing future vision. Moses had to be encouraged by the Lord after apparent failure on his first attempt.

*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.* Psalm 37:23-25

*For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity. Proverbs 24:16*

*Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. Micah 7:8, NIV*

Ultimately the only failure is to not get up and try again. This is why Paul was so clear about forgetting those things that are behind (Phil. 3:13). This is an important key to vision fulfillment—forgetting and forgiving.

*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead...*

## H. The Opposition of Small Thinkers

Every environment has its share of small thinkers who are ready to burst every bubble of enthusiasm that vision can create.

Small Thinkers	Big Thinkers
See the problems	See the opportunities
See the cost	See the reward
See the work	See the harvest
Ask “Why?”	Ask “Why not?”

## III. How does Paul model the characteristics of a vision achiever?

A. Paul achieved his vision before he died (II Tim. 4:6-8).

*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

B. Paul possessed the characteristics of a vision achiever.

1. Paul knew his place and what he was supposed to do.

He knew his gifts, his grace, his calling and his area or sphere of rule (Rom. 12:3; II Cor. 10:12-16).

*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Romans 12:3*

*Oh, don't worry; I wouldn't dare say that I am as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, and measuring themselves by themselves. What foolishness! 13 But we will not boast of authority we do not have. Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God's plan for us, and this plan includes our working there with you. 14 We are not going too far when we claim authority over you, for we were the first to travel all the way to you with the Good News of Christ. 15 Nor do we claim credit for the work someone else has done. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow and that our work among you will be greatly enlarged. 16 Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places that are far beyond you, where no one else is working. Then there will be no question about being in someone else's territory.*

II Corinthians 10:12-16, NLT

2. Paul was able to distinguish between fantasy and reality (I Cor. 9:26).

*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

3. Paul was able to keep a single focus (Phil. 3:13-14).

*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

4. Paul was able to discipline himself to stay on focus (I Cor. 9:24-27).

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

5. Paul was able to accept a challenge (Acts 20:24).

*And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:18-24*

6. Paul was a constant learner (II Tim. 4:13)

He was studying right up to the end.

*Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come--and the books, especially the parchments.*

7. Paul was able to turn obstacles into opportunities.

a. Paul had many obstacles to overcome (II Cor. 11:23-28, NLT).

*They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. 24 Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. 26 I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. 27 I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. 28 Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along.*

b. Paul did not let his circumstances change who he was (Eph. 6:20).

He saw himself as an ambassador; after he was imprisoned he became an “ambassador in chains.”

For Paul, only one thing had changed and that was his imprisonment. He was still an apostle; He was still called by God; He was still a preacher and a teacher; He was still responsible for the churches he had birthed and he was still going to fulfill the original word over his life (Acts 9:15-16).

*But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.”*

c. Paul took all that life gave him as coming from the Lord (Eph. 4:1).

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called...*

Paul never once referred to himself as a prisoner of Rome; he was a prisoner of the Lord or a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

- d. Paul did not dwell on what he could not do; he focused on what he could do.

Paul was able to do this because he was a man of determination who did not let negative circumstances keep him from fulfilling his assignment from the Lord.

Too often we take negative circumstances as a sign that God does not want us to do something. If the apostles had had this attitude, they never would have accomplished anything worthwhile.

- e. Paul turned obstacles into opportunities.

Paul had a way of seeing the opportunity in everything. He was able to do this because he received everything in his life as coming from the Lord. He could do this because he believed in God and he believed that God was in control of his life. Because of this he was able to see God in everything.

Paul knew how to turn obstacles into opportunities.

- In the Philippian jail he ministered in the prison.
- After his arrest in Jerusalem he preached to the mob.
- When he was under arrest in Caesarea he witnessed to governors.
- When he was on the slave ship he ministered to the crew.
- When he was shipwrecked on Malta he ministered to the islanders.
- When he was in Rome he continued his ministry from his hired house.

8. Paul was willing to sacrifice present comfort for the long-term gain.

When Paul finally got to the Antioch church, he arrived at a comfortable place for him to minister as a teacher. But living and dying in Antioch was not his call or his vision. He had to be willing to leave the comfort of the Antioch and go on the road where he would face the challenges referred to earlier.

9. Paul was able to adapt and change.

Paul was a strategic planner. After he returned to Antioch after the first missionary journey, he reengaged in the church for a season. However, he was soon planning for the next move. He decided to go back and visit the places where he had been and launch out into some new territory (Acts 15:36). He had his plan (Acts 16:6-7), but God interrupted that plan and redirected him to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10).

It is interesting to see here that God directed Paul on the fly. Or we could say that God directed him when the ship was moving.

10. Paul was able to stay relevant to culture and the times (I Cor. 9:19-23).

*This means I am not bound to obey people just because they pay me, yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ. 20 When I*

*am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with those who follow the Jewish laws, I do the same, even though I am not subject to the law, so that I can bring them to Christ. 21 When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. 22 When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. 23 I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings.*

11. Paul was a man who spoke words of faith (Phil 4:13).

*...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ... Philippians 1:6*

*For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Philippians 1:19-21*

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13*

*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19*

12. Paul was able to make bold decisions (Acts 13:46-49; I Th. 2:2).

13. Paul was a team player who motivated others to join him in the work.

- a. Paul didn't see people as problems, he had a genuine love for others (Phil.1:3, 7-8; 2:26-27; I Th. 2:6-8).

*Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. I Thessalonians 2:6-8*

- b. Paul realized his dependence on others; he knew he was not self-sufficient (Phil 2:25; Col. 1:7; 4:7, 10-11; Philemon 2, 11, 17, 24).

- i. Paul always had something good to say about people. He did not neglect to compliment them on their strengths (Eph. 1:2; 6:21; Col. 1:2, 4, 7; 2:5; 4:12-13; Philemon 5, 7).

- ii. Paul never failed to exalt and acknowledge support ministries even though their role may have been minor (Phil 1:1; 2:25, 29-30; Col. 1:1).
    - iii. Paul never took others for granted, but was always thankful for their contribution to his ministry, and he was faithful to tell them (Phil. 4:14, 18).
  - c. Paul lived and poured out his life for others (Phil 2:17).
    - i. Paul spent time in prayer for others (Phil 1:4, 9; Col. 1:3, 9; Philemon 4).
    - ii. Paul was willing to make financial sacrifices for others (Philemon 18-19).
    - iii. Paul made most decisions in his life on the basis of how it would affect others (Phil. 1:24-26; 4:17; Philemon 13-14).
  - d. Paul was very much concerned about seeing others realize their full potential in God (Phil. 4:3; Col. 4:17).
    - i. Paul had confidence in others. He trusted them with important missions (Eph. 6:22; Philemon 21).
    - ii. Paul was not afraid to get specific with people if it would help them (Phil. 4:2).
- 14. Paul was willing to invest in people. Not just people who they perceive they can use for their own ends.
- 15. Paul drew strength from other vision achievers (Gal. 2:9).
- 16. Paul had patience to wait for the vision to be realized.

Paul had the vision early, but it took many years for it to come to pass.

- 17. Paul had lived with a sense of accountability to God (I Cor. 9:16).

*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*

## Lesson 12

### Writing the Vision

Today's Vision Quote:

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." –George Harrison

In our introductory sessions we discussed eight essential qualities or characteristics of an effective vision. These characteristics included the following:

- The vision must be worthwhile.
- The vision must be clear.
- The vision must be specific.
- The vision must be challenging.
- The vision must inspire.
- The vision must be attainable.
- The vision must be evaluated.
- The vision must be accomplished.

In today's session we will be going back to our key Scripture verse from Habakkuk 2:2-3. We will be emphasizing the part of this passage that encouraged the writing down of the vision. We are going to focus on this aspect of vision because writing the vision is so critical in assisting us in making our vision true to these eight characteristics.

We have read these verses from Habakkuk before but I want to read them again because they are so relevant to the writing of the vision.

*Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."*

Other translations of the verse:

*Then the LORD told me: "I will give you my message in the form of a vision. Write it clearly enough to be read at a glance. At the time I have decided, my words will come true. You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting-- it will happen!"* –CEV

*Then the LORD said to me, "Write my answer in large, clear letters on a tablet, so that a runner can read it and tell everyone else. But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed."* –NLT

*And then GOD answered: "Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming--it can hardly wait! And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time."* –Msg



## **I. What is the power of the written word?**

- A. God wrote things down that were important to Him (Ex. 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1; Deut. 9:10; 10:2).

*And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. Exodus 31:18*

- B. God often encouraged or commanded His servants to write things down.

1. He commanded Moses to write down His words to the people of God (Ex. 17:14; 24:12; Deut. 28:58).

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua..." Exodus 17:14a*

It is interesting that the words of God were to be written down so that it could accurately be recounted to others.

2. He commanded the people of God to write His words on the doorposts of their houses (Deut. 6:1-9; 11:18-21).

*Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. Deuteronomy 11:18-21*

In this verse it is clear that God intended for the children of the family to learn through multiple means of hearing the truth and seeing the truth on the walls of their house.

3. He commanded that the future kings should write down the book of the law so that they would remember God's statutes (Deut. 17:18-20).

*Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.*

The personal exercise of a king writing his own copy of the law was so that the word would eventually get into his heart and affect his behavior. This would accomplish more than a simple reading of an already published book.

4. He gave David the pattern for the temple by assisting him in writing it down (I Chr. 28:19).

*“All this,” said David, “the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.”*

This written pattern was extremely valuable for David to be able to pass this vision on to the next generation (Solomon) who would actually complete the work.

5. He commanded others to write down the words that were spoken to them.
  - a. Isaiah (Is. 30:8)
  - b. Jeremiah (Jer. 30:1-2; 36:2, 28)
  - c. Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:11)

*And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple and its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. Write it down in their sight, so that they may keep its whole design and all its ordinances, and perform them.*

God’s ultimate purpose for people writing down the words of His covenants was so that they would eventually get into their hearts (Ps. Jer. 31:33).

C. Biblical leaders understood the power of writing things down.

1. Moses commanded the people to write the law on memorial stones taken from the Jordan River (Deut. 27:1-3, 8; Josh. 8:32).

*Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: “Keep all the commandments which I command you today. And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey,’ just as the LORD God of your fathers promised you...And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 27:1-3, 8*

Every time they walked past these stones it would serve as a reminder to them of God’s covenant with them and His great deliverance.

2. Joshua knew that writing down the words of commitment would serve as a perpetual reminder and a constant witness (Josh. 24:24-27).

3. Nehemiah knew that writing down the words of the covenant would render the covenant more sure (Neh. 9:38).

*And because of all this, we make a sure covenant and write it; our leaders, our Levites, and our priests seal it.*

*In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it. –NIV*

There is something about putting a covenant in writing and having all of the leaders sign it that makes it a more serious reality.

- D. Jesus received authority from the written word (Mt. 4:4-10).

## **II. How does writing the vision assist in achieving the vision?**

There is power in writing things down. Someone has said, “When you write things down, they happen!”

This is true in many aspects of life from a simple grocery list to a “To Do” list at your work place. This is especially true of the vision that we have for our life, our business or our local church. Putting words on a piece of paper actually puts a process in motion.

“Something potent occurs when a thought graduates from a couple of synapses firing off in your head to a statement on paper: the idea gets a life of its own, it becomes a possibility that can stare back at you, and ask what you’re going to do about it. Writing down your goals means you’ll have a reminder, a record, and most importantly, the experience of promoting an idle thought that deserves to be more than that to a written statement. Lots of people may have goals in their heads, but a goal is only a whim until you articulate it.” –Gina Trapani

- A. Writing things down helps you to think through the vision.

There is something about putting thoughts down on paper that helps you see them more clearly. The first time you write things is not normally how they will eventually be communicated. It is a starting point. You can look at what you have written, meditate on it and think it through.

- B. Writing things down helps you work out the details of the vision.

Once you settle on the destination that you want to achieve and write it down, you can think backwards from there to where you are in the present. In doing so you can begin to build the steps from where you are to where you want to be. Writing things down, therefore, helps you to visualize steps to fulfillment.

- C. Writing things down helps you to make the vision concrete.

It is a way of giving substance to the things hoped for. It is declaring it and confirming it in writing. It is a way of committing and binding ourselves to it. Unless we put it into written form, it remains something of a dream, an idea or a fantasy that can be changed.

- D. Writing things down shows that you are taking your vision seriously.

When you are communicating information to someone that is complex and they do not take notes and write down what is being said, it makes you wonder if they are taking the matter seriously. When you write something down it says, “I am very serious about this. I am going to do something about it. I am going to follow through.”

- E. Writing things down helps people to remember the vision.

Once you have worked through the process of writing a plain vision, it becomes easier to add it to your permanent memory. In most cases this statement of vision will be repeated often.

- F. Writing things down reduces stress.

Because you have already gone through the exercise of writing the vision you do not have to rethink, stress or be anxious over direction each and every day.

- G. Writing things down helps you to articulate your vision.

If every time you utter your vision you use different words and different forms it will be more difficult to put it into logical terms. The more you have worked on the writing of it the easier it will be to communicate it to others.

- H. Writing things down helps you bring others into your vision quickly.

We already learned that your vision will most likely require the involvement of others for its fulfillment. Having your vision written in a way that it can be quickly and easily understood by others will help this process immensely.

- I. Writing things down facilitates commitment.

People do not like to commit to things they do not understand and cannot articulate. The more specific our vision is the easier it will be to bring people with similar passions on board.

- J. Writing things down helps you focus and refocus your activity.

Any vision can lose sharpness and clarity over time. However, if the vision has been clearly written, it can continually bring us back to a proper focus.

- K. Writing things down helps you to evaluate progress.

By knowing specifically what you are trying to achieve, you can evaluate your progress along the way. As you look honestly at your progress you can make any adjustments that need to be made to become more effective.

L. Writing things down helps you to stay accountable.

A well constructed vision statement can serve as a point of regular accountability and push you along toward fulfillment.

M. Writing things down helps you to accomplish the vision.

## **Lesson 13-14**

### **Key Elements of Vision Fulfillment**

So far in this course we have been using the concept of vision in a general sense. When we talk about vision in a general sense we are talking about hearing from God as it pertains to life purpose, business direction and calling as a member of the Body of Christ. However, as we seek to move from receiving a vision to fulfilling a vision we need to identify certain tools that can help us reach our destination.

#### **I. What are the five main elements contributing to vision success or fulfillment?**

There are five tools that will assist in bringing one's vision to fulfillment or completion.

- A. A Concise Mission Statement
- B. A Consistent Vision Statement
- C. Long Term and Short Term Goals
- D. Clearly Articulated Values
- E. Appropriate Strategies or Methodologies

#### **II. What is a mission statement and what is its purpose?**

##### **A. What is a mission statement?**

A mission statement is a brief, written statement reflecting the primary purpose for which the organization has been established. A mission statement answers the question, "Why do we exist?" A good mission statement should spell out the overall goal.

##### **B. What is the purpose of a mission statement?**

A good mission statement will accomplish several things.

1. A mission statement will explain your intentions to people both inside and outside of the organization.

In this sense it can serve as a great branding tool to promote your organization both within and outside your organization.

2. A mission statement will help give a sense of direction to everyone in the organization (especially management).

As such it should be the first reference point for all of the decisions that are made at every level in the organization. In other words, all strategic decisions should be consistent with the mission statement.

3. A mission statement will help keep the organization tied into purpose.

It is so easy for organizations to gradually drift off course. It is not wrong for an organization to evolve over time. But this evolution should be based on a purposeful decision rather than gradual erosion caused by the external climate and weather changes.

4. A mission statement will help keep the organization focused on the “main thing.”

This means being focused regarding the use and expenditure of energy and resources. We all have limited resources. Are we utilizing them to the maximum when it comes to our primary function? Or are the resources being depleted or minimized by using them on non-essentials?

5. A mission statement will promote unity throughout the organization.

In this sense it helps to make sure that everyone and every department is “on the same page.”

6. A mission statement helps you to set your agenda for the present and near future.
7. A mission statement will serve as a guide to the decision making process.
8. A mission statement will motivate people to be personally involved and committed.

This includes attracting volunteers, donors and partners.

### **C. What are the qualities of an effective mission statement?**

1. An effective mission statement is broad.

Unlike the vision statement, the mission statement paints the purpose of the organization in the broadest of terms.

2. An effective mission statement is brief.

It is best when it can be expressed in one well-thought-out sentence (or two at the most).

3. An effective mission statement is clear.

This means that the mission statement should be free from any symbolic language or words that have multiple meanings. Each word in the sentence should be carefully weighed and evaluated to ensure that it accurately reflects what is meant.

4. An effective mission statement inspires.

5. An effective mission statement aligns with the values of the organization.

#### **D. How is a mission statement formulated?**

Ideally a mission statement is formulated at the inception of a church or organization. However, this is not the case for most churches or organizations. If no mission statement exists for the organization it is easy to turn this exercise into a group learning and team building process.

1. Set aside time with your leadership group for this purpose and this purpose alone.

This process will take some time and should not be rushed. No time limit should be placed on this process if it is to be meaningful. Those given to administration need to bear with those who like to take more time to express themselves.

2. Set the stage and allow members of the group to brainstorm by responding openly to some key questions.
  - Why do you believe that we exist?
  - What are you here for?
  - What do you believe we are to accomplish together?
  - What are your personal expectations regarding involvement in this organization?
  - What are the most important things that we should never lose sight of?
3. Set the group at ease by explaining that there are no right or wrong answers in this process.
4. Record and write down all comments or suggestions without any particular filter on what is being said until no new thoughts are coming forth.
5. Identify the most commonly held and most repeated concepts.
6. Attempt to bring the group to a consensus regarding the core themes.
7. Utilize the results to compose a first attempt or rough draft of the proposed statement taking into account the group consensus.
8. Work over the wording until it passes “the mother test.”

Before a final draft can come forth, each and every word must be individually evaluated so that the best possible wording can be achieved. After it is all completed it should pass “the mother test.” That is, the statement should be able to be given to anyone’s mother and it should make perfect sense to her. If she does not understand it, then go back to the drawing board and work on it until she does.



In a local church, this process will most likely happen among the elders or leadership team of the church. It will be tempered by the fact that Christ has a vision for the church. In addition, the discussion will be guided by the vision of the senior pastor of the church.

### **The Mission Statement of City Life Church**

Long form:

*City Life Church exists for the purpose of reaching people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, raising leaders for all areas of church and society and releasing ministry to extend the Kingdom of God in all spheres of influence.*

Shorter form:

*Reaching People, Raising Leaders, Releasing Ministry*

Shortest form:

*Reaching, Raising, Releasing*

## **III. What is a vision statement and what is its purpose?**

### **A. What is a vision statement?**

A vision statement is brief paragraph reflecting the translation of the organization's mission into a specific description and details of the desired outcomes creating a concrete image of the target. A vision statement paints a picture of the future look of the organization.

If you were standing in your organization or church ten years from now, what would it look like? Can you paint that picture for us in a few carefully worded sentences?

Vision statements are often confused with mission statements and in many ways they serve to complement each other. They certainly exist for a similar purpose and must be thoroughly consistent with each other.

### **B. What is the difference between a mission statement and a vision statement?**

It is critical that we do not try to split hairs when we define these concepts. It is also important that we realize that many people offer differing perspectives relative the distinction between vision and mission statements. If you talk about the subject long enough everyone will become confused. However, for the purpose of this course we will make the following distinctions.

1. A mission statement defines the broad purpose for which an organization exists.

2. A vision statement defines the intended or future state of the organization in terms of its fundamental objectives and strategic direction in the fulfillment of that mission.

The mission statement is more general, the vision statement more specific. The mission statement will most likely remain the same for the life of the church or organization, while the vision statement may need to be updated from time to time. This is especially true if that organization is a local church because so much of its vision is linked to Christ's commands.

### **C. What is the purpose of a vision statement?**

The purpose of the vision statement is very much like the eight-fold purpose given for the mission statement above (review them briefly).

1. It helps to flesh out the overall mission of the church.

As such it serves as a tool to help you communicate the vision which God has entrusted to you. In addition, it provides some of the details for the achievement of the mission.

2. It will help dictate to the programs and specific ministries of the church.
3. It will change to adapt to the ever changing world of the future.

### **D. What are some guidelines for the development of a vision statement?**

The process of developing a vision statement is similar to that of developing a mission statement. Vision statements will usually be much longer than mission statement and will reflect the following:

1. The vision statement should begin with a summary phrase that captures the essence of the vision.
2. The vision statement should reflect the nature of the vision when it is complete.
3. The vision statement should be composed of sentences that describe the best possible outcomes.
4. The vision statement should focus on outcomes that are a reachable distance away (five to ten years).
5. The vision statement should be challenging.

Your vision statement should inspire you to reach for the stars and may even be more than you could hope for (without being totally unrealistic). Remember, the purpose of this statement is to inspire, motivate, energize and stimulate creativity on the part of those who read it. An effective vision statement should force you out of your comfort zone and force you to stretch.

6. The vision statement is not the same as goals.

Goals will be concrete short and long term targets that will come out the vision statement. These will be specific and measurable. The fulfillment of these will goals will serve to help us measure our success.

7. The vision statement should be stated in the present tense.

It is your faith vision. It is the substance of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1). It is a declaring of those things that are not as though they are.

*Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]. –Amp*

8. The vision statement will need to be periodically evaluated and, if necessary, updated.

Things change; times change; and we change. Our vision must be progressive. At present we see through a glass darkly (I Cor. 13:12). We construct our statements in the present with incomplete information and uncertainty regarding the future.

In many cases you will find that your vision can remain consistent with what you want for a long time, and other times you may have a new visitation from the Lord and have to rewrite your statements from scratch.

### **The Vision Statement of City Life Church**

The vision of City Life Church is to be an apostolic or a resource church that reflects a strong commitment to prayer, the word of God, evangelism, discipleship, spirit-filled worship, authentic community, multicultural and multigenerational expression, team ministry and world outreach. It seeks exemplify a spirit of generosity by lifting, equipping and providing resources to the poor, to believers, to church leaders and to local churches assisting them in entering into their full destiny in God. This vision includes the establishing of a numerically strong pattern church, a ministry training center, online resources for all phases of church life and the establishment of like churches throughout the world.

## **IV. How do long term and short term goals contribute to vision fulfillment?**

For more details on long and short term goals see the course *Life Management II*, Lesson 2-3.

- A. What is the difference between purpose, goals and achievements?

1. Purpose or mission is that thing for which a person or company is born. It is their reason for existing. It is that unique thing for which they were created. It is the race that they are to run. It is the mark of the high calling to which they are to attain. It is the course that God has laid out for them. It is the will of God for their life.

*“More men fail through lack of purpose than through lack of talent.”*

–Billy Sunday

2. A goal is a long or short term target or proposal that you place in front of yourself as a specific step or challenge toward accomplishing your ultimate purpose. Every purpose is realized by setting and accomplishing specific shorter range goals.
3. Achievement is the realization of a goal or purpose. It is to finish, to carry out, to bring to an end or to obtain the final result. The achievement of goals is motivation in itself to set new and higher goals. Ultimately, the achievement of our created purpose will give a sense of significance to our lives.

B. Why is it important to have goals?

1. Having goals makes life meaningful, interesting and exciting.
2. Goals are an effective way to measure our effort.
3. Goals give us targets toward which to aim our faith and our confession.
4. Goals help us to stay focused and motivated.
5. Goal setting forces us to stretch and move from mediocrity to excellence.
6. Goals can keep us moving on the path toward ultimate success.

*“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal.”* –Hannah More (1745-1833)

7. Goal setting and achievement keeps us fresh and alive.

The Goal-Setters Proverb,

“Blessed are those who aim at nothing, for they shall hit their target.”

C. What are some characteristics of a good goal?

For goals to be effective they should have the following characteristics:

1. Goals should be specific.
2. Goals should be realistic and achievable.

3. Goals should be measurable.
4. Goals should be timely. That is they should be able to be accomplished in a specific time.

**D. What are some additional guidelines for setting goals?**

When setting goals:

1. Calculate the amount of time, energy and effort that is needed to accomplish the whole task (Luke 14:24-33).
2. Anticipate distractions, hindrances and obstacles that will most likely be in your path.
3. Determine if you are setting your goals too high or too low.
4. Determine the practical steps that must be taken toward the realization of your goal.
5. Write your goals and use them as prayer points before the Lord.
6. When specific goals are not reached, set new ones immediately based on what you learned in the process.

**V. What are values and how do they help to promote vision fulfillment?**

**A. What are values?**

1. Values are ideals that are accepted by a person or a group.
2. Values are core beliefs to which people have an emotional bond.
3. Values are underlying principles that shape a person's views of right and wrong.
4. Values are guiding principles that determine what is desirable in life especially as it pertains to personal conduct.

**B. What are the characteristics of values and value statements?**

1. Values are not a measure of what is right or wrong.

Values are not intrinsically good or bad. Values are subjective and often shaped by our culture, education or parents. The values of a Christian should be based on the principles of the Word of God found in the Bible.

2. Values affect behavior.

Values determine why you do what you do in any given scenario. Values and conscience are closely related. Our conscience is shaped by the values that have been put into us over time. If a value is genuine, you do not have to think too much about it when making choices. Your values naturally underlie all that you do.

3. Values are unique and personal.

Values may vary from person to person and organization to organization.

4. Values do not define the work, but influence how we go about our work.

### **C. How do clearly articulated core values promote vision fulfillment?**

The core values of an organization are shared values that serve as a basis for our work and conduct. They are those primary principles that we have defined as the “non-negotiables” in our life and ministry. They are the solid ground for which we are prepared to live and die regardless of the changes in society, government or technology.

1. They help us to determine the means by which we will progress.
2. They help guide us in the decision making process.
3. They help us to filter our options.
4. They help us articulate who we are and what we truly stand for.
5. They help us to bring others into our vision.
6. They help us to know what to celebrate or reward in the process.
7. They help us to explain why we do things the way we do.

## **VI. How do you develop and evaluate strategies that will ensure vision fulfillment?**

“Achieve success in any area of life by identifying the optimum strategies and repeating them until they become habits.” –Charles J. Givens

### **A. What is a strategy?**

1. A strategy is a systematic plan of action.
2. A strategy is a concrete, long-term plan of action designed to achieve a specific goal.
3. A strategy is a means by which a vision is realized. It is a means for getting from here to there.
4. A strategy is a way of achieving the goal in a way that is consistent with the core values of the organization.

Strategy answers the question, “What should we be doing now?”

“The goals you set for yourself and the strategies you choose become your blueprint or plan. Strategies are like recipes: choose the right ingredients, mix them in the correct proportions, and you will always produce the same predictable results: in this case financial success. The success strategies for managing money and building wealth are called Money Strategies. By learning to use money strategies as a part of your day-to-day life, financial frustration and failure will become a thing of the past.”  
–Charles J. Givens

Developing strategy is one of the primary functions of senior leadership in any organization.

## **B. What is the strategy of City Life Church to achieve vision?**

City Life Church seeks to achieve vision through four main channels.

### **1. Life Track**

The Life Track is designed to develop genuine converts and reproducing disciples.

### **2. Life Groups**

The Life Groups are designed to foster deeper discipleship and authentic community among the believers.

### **3. Life Celebrations**

Life Celebrations are designed to celebrate the Lord and the fruit of the other tracks in a corporate context.

### **4. Life Resources**

Life Resources is designed to assist in fulfilling the commission of Christ by providing resources to the other track and to the world, by equipping leaders, by strengthening leaders and churches outside of the local church and by planting other churches.





## Lesson 15-16

### Communicating and Casting Vision

#### I. What is the importance of communicating the vision?

“Once a vision is created, it must be communicated and articulated effectively so that it becomes the *shared* vision of everyone in the organization. It is not always easy to spread a vision through the business so the key part of creating shared vision is in articulating it and communicating it in an enduring fashion. Once this shared vision is created, it will become a driving force that compels people to do something, change something, become something.”

–Lucas, J. R., Anatomy of a Vision Statement, *Management Review*, February 1998

The communication of vision is essential to the success of any organization because every organization is made up of many individuals within and outside of the organization who are vital to the success of the vision.

If we are not careful we can minimize the importance of communication and therefore not focus on the work of communication. Some people might be tempted to say, “After all we have a mission to complete, we don’t have time to sit around and talk about it.”

It is never a waste of time to put energy and effort into the ongoing communication and re-communication of vision. Successful communication of one’s vision can accomplish several things.

- A. The successful communication of a vision contributes to the building of a shared vision.

Communication may be defined as the transfer of a message or information from one person to another or a group of people for a common understanding.

When everyone in the organization shares the vision and the values that serve as a foundation to that vision, every person will find purpose and meaning in what they do and they will effectively communicate or represent that vision to others.

- B. The successful communication of a vision ensures unity within every level of the organization.

When we focus on the communication processes in the organization it reduces the potential for the use of some of the following phraseology.

- “there must have been a breakdown in communication”
- “something seems to have fallen through the cracks”
- “apparently there was a disconnect”
- “we definitely have a communication barrier”

- C. The successful communication of a vision minimizes departmental conflict and competition for the same resources (hub versus spokes).

- D. The successful communication of a vision maximizes the expenditure of energy toward a common goal.
- E. The successful communication of a vision ensures that you are the one defining yourself to others.

People are going to form an opinion about you and the work that you are doing. How do they form that opinion? What data are they using to make a judgment about you, your business or your local church? Are you leaving it up to them to form their own opinion?

By focusing on our communication to others we become the ones who define the vision. We then can more easily invite others to share with us in that vision.

## **II. What are the six elements of effective communication?**

There are six main elements of effective communication that must be acknowledged if we are going to be successful in communicating our vision. Unless we take these components into account we may not be communicating what we think we are communicating. Carefully evaluating these components of communication will help us to be sure that there is no confusion between...

- The message we intend to send.
- The message we actually send.
- The message that the receiver understands.

### **A. The Context**

The context is the setting in which your church or organization is found. What is appropriate to one setting may not be appropriate to another setting. What is effective in one setting may not be effective in another setting.

There are several things that contribute to the context of any organization that may have a bearing on how a vision is communicated.

1. The country
2. The state or province
3. The city
4. The area of the city or suburb
5. The social or cultural context
6. The time in history

### **B. The Sender**

The sender is the originator, speaker or writer of the vision and the one who is seeking to express or communicate the vision, idea, thought or information. The sender is the one who writes or speaks the vision. The sender is sometimes called

the “encoder” because the sender is the one who puts the message into the format in which it will be communicated.

### **C. The Message**

The message in this case is the content of the vision and mission that the sender is attempting to convey.

### **D. The Medium**

The medium refers to the actual technology, devices, channels or means by which the message flows from the sender to the receiver.

### **E. The Receiver**

The receiver is the person for whom the message is intended. It is the person who is expected to accurately “decode” the message that has been “encoded” by the sender. The receiver is the target audience to whom the message was directed.

### **F. Feedback**

The process of feedback is how the sender determines whether or not the message has been accurately delivered.

Someone has once said, “If the student has not learned, the teacher has not taught.”

We can be very clever in the communication of our vision, but if people do not seem to “get it,” perhaps we should evaluate how we are saying what we are saying.

Feedback comes to us in many ways. It can be an oral or written message, an action or simply silence.

## **III. Who are the primary targets of communication?**

When communicating your vision it is important to know the target of your communication. Knowing the target will help you to determine the means or medium by which you will communicate and how you will encode the message. There are two primary aspects of communication that help us to define our targets.

### **A. There is internal communication.**

When it comes to internal communication, there are several targets that must be taken into account when casting vision.

1. There are the leaders or members of the board.
2. There are staff members or those who work for the organization.
3. There are volunteers who serve at various levels in the organization.

4. There are members of the congregation. In the realm of business this would be your client base.

All of these groups must be targeted with relevant styles of communication to be sure that they understand the overall vision. It is critical that all of these groups within the organization are on the same page.

#### **B. There is external communication.**

External communication is any communication that interfaces with the general public. This would include such things as flyers, mailings, email, websites, signage, advertisements and even the physical building itself.

What can members of the general public tell about your vision when they observe your direct and indirect communication? What kind of face do these things put on your church or organization?

### **IV. What are some of the main ways to communicate vision?**

“Part of your job as a leader is to generate commitment to your organization’s vision. To do this, you have to communicate the vision in a way that matters to people.”

–Talula Cartwright, *Communicating Your Vision*

People have different learning styles and therefore we must communicate our vision in ways that can touch all of those learning styles.

#### **A. Written**

We must communicate our vision in written form. This is where our vision and mission statements help us. We will also talk later about written statements of core values that will help to solidify your core.

#### **B. Oral**

We must communicate our vision orally. This is why it is so important to equip our key leaders and staff with the ability to articulate the vision. This oral communication takes place in group settings and in personal, one-on-one contacts.

“Communicating a vision is like making a sales pitch. You want people in the organization to believe the vision and to pass it on to others.” –Talula Cartwright

#### **C. Visual**

We must communicate our vision in ways that it can be seen with the eyes or visually. Creative and well thought out graphic displays can be valuable in further affirming vision and values.

#### **D. Example**

The example of people is a powerful means of communicating vision. When it comes to an organization there are two aspects to example that help to demonstrate vision.

### **1. Modeling**

Whatever we put in writing we must actually practice. The Pharisees were called “hypocrites” because their actions did not line up with their words (Mt. 23:3-4).

*Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

Someone said it this way, “What is written on the walls should be practiced down the halls.”

### **2. Celebrating**

You demonstrate to the world what you value by what you celebrate. What is celebrated in your organization? What is acknowledged? What is honored?

## **V. What are the characteristics of effective communication?**

There are some widely accepted characteristics of effective communication that are repeated so often on the internet that I have no idea who originated them. They are sometimes called the Seven “C’s” of Communication.

Effective communication is...

### **A. Concise**

This means that the message should be communicated in as few words as possible avoiding all unnecessary repetition. The art of doing this in a way that is still thorough or complete is one of the biggest challenges.

- Have you said enough, but just enough?
- Have you avoided needless “filler” words and phrases?

### **B. Concrete**

This means that the message should be as specific as possible including facts and figures to avoid overly general interpretation.

### **C. Clear**

This means that the message should use words and language that is unambiguous and familiar to the targeted audience.

- Have you used familiar words, short sentences?
- Have you avoided “business” and technical terms?
- Have you used the reader’s language?

#### **D. Complete**

This means that the message should provide all of the necessary information so that those who receive it can respond appropriately or as intended.

- Have you given all the facts?
- Have you covered the essentials?
- Did you carefully plan what you wrote?

#### **E. Courteous**

This means that the message should be sincere, tactful and thoughtful.

- Will it win good will?
- Have you used positive, “pleasant-toned” words?
- Would you enjoy reading what you have written?

#### **F. Correct**

This means that the message should be grammatically correct and accurate in all that is said.

- Have you checked all facts for correctness?
- Have you spelled everything correctly?
- Have you checked your punctuation and grammar?

#### **G. Considerate**

This means that the message should be aimed at the needs of the person receiving it and how it serves them. This means that the message is perceived to be the organization serving the person rather than the person serving the organization.

The chief art in writing is to know:

- How much to put in.
- What to leave out.
- When to quit.

The test is this: Will your inclusion of the material make it easier to understand? Will it help the message achieve its purpose?

### **VI. What are some guidelines for writing and displaying our vision?**

A. There are some aspects of Habakkuk's challenge that relate to the issue of how to write the vision.

1. Make it plain.
2. Put it in bold letters.
3. Display it so it can be read on the fly.

B. There are many practical expressions that should help to communicate or display the vision.

1. Logo
2. Signage
3. Business Cards
4. Stationary and Letterhead
5. Advertisements (Radio, TV, Newspaper)
6. Touch Cards
7. Flyers
8. Brochures
9. Bulletins
10. Newsletters
11. Banners
12. Posters
13. Billboards
14. Slogans
15. Notice Boards
16. Power Points
17. Website
18. Display Racks
19. Employee Handbook
20. Any Other Printed Matter

C. There is the most important way to communicate vision—tell the story.

The story of the organization or church should be told over and over again to the constituency so that nearly everyone can repeat it.

1. It should be told as a part of all membership programs.
2. It should be rehearsed regularly for the entire church.

***The world will stand aside for those with a compelling Vision and a convincing plan for how to get there. –Doug Macnamara***

## **Lesson 17**

### **Creating a Team Vision**

We are living in times when people in all spheres of business and industry are realizing the importance of leading their organizations with a team of leaders. Of course this is God's model for the local church as well. The local church is led and directed by a team of leaders called "elders." In addition, most churches have other tiers of leadership who contribute in a significant way to the growth and development of the organization. This reality necessitates that we look at the issue of vision through the eyes of team leadership and team ministry.

#### **I. What is a team?**

"A team is one or more beasts of burden yoked to the same load." –Unknown

"A team is many voices with a single heart." –John Maxwell

"A team is a small group of people with complementary skills committed to a common purpose and set of specific performance goals." –Jon Katzenbach

"A real team is a group of very different individuals who share a commitment to working together to achieve common goals." –Patricia Fripp

"A team comprises a group of people or animals linked in a common purpose."  
–Wikipedia

#### **II. What is a "team vision"?**

Another word for team vision is "shared vision."

A. A vision is a picture of the future you want to possess.

As such it will tell us...

1. Where do you want to be?
2. What do you want to create?
3. To what are you committed?
4. In what do you believe?

B. A team vision is a shared picture that describes collective aspirations.

As such it will tell us...

1. Where do we want to be?
2. What do we want to create?
3. To what are we committed?
4. In what do we believe?

C. A team vision is a goal toward which all of the members of the team are willing to work.



The phrase “one team, one vision” aptly describes the ideal goal of a leadership team. The purpose of assembling a team is to accomplish bigger goals than that which would be possible for the individual working alone.

### **III. Why is it important to create a team vision?**

A. Having a clearly defined vision that is shared by the entire leadership team will have many benefits.

1. It will help to unify the leadership team toward a common purpose.
2. It will help each member of the team to focus on their contribution to the whole.
3. It will help members of the team to coordinate their activities continuously.

In a team, members contribute to the organization’s success by applying their unique talents, knowledge and creativity to team objectives.

B. Working together as a team to define the shared vision also has many benefits.

1. It will make it easier for members of the team to get the vision off of the wall and into their hearts.
2. It will make it easier for members of the team to participate in the vision.
3. It will make it easier for members of the team to take ownership of the vision.
4. It will make it easier for members of the team to preach the vision.
5. It will make it easier for members of the team to commit themselves to the vision.

### **IV. How can you tell when a vision is truly a team vision?**

There are several ways that you can tell a vision is, in fact, a shared vision.

A. You can tell that the vision is a team vision when members of the team understand the vision.

When you overhear a member of the team explaining the vision simply and correctly to others, you know that he understands the vision.

B. You can tell that the vision is a team vision by how members of the team share the vision.

When you overhear a member of the team talking about the vision and they use personal pronouns to describe it such as “I” and “we” rather than “he” and “they”, you know that he has adopted the vision as his own.

- C. You can tell that the vision is a team vision when members of the team function effortlessly according to the vision.

When a member of the team makes suggestions and proposes activities that are always thoroughly consistent with the overall vision, you know that the vision has become a major filter in their own heart and mind.

However, if their proposals and suggestions always seem to be in another direction and pulling against the vision, you know that the vision is still strained for them.

- D. You can tell that the vision is a team vision when members of the team defend the vision passionately.

## **V. What will the process of creating a team vision do for the team?**

There are many benefits that can be felt in the actual process of working together with a team in the realm of defining vision.

- A. In the process the team leader can get a better sense of how individual members of the team feel about the overall vision.

It will help the leader to identify weak spots or concepts that have not been clearly birthed into the team. He may be able identify team members that need some additional nurture, training or information.

- B. In the process members of the team can develop new understanding of the other members of the team in realms of ministry, heart and passion.

Hopefully, each team member will grow into a new appreciation, respect and understanding regarding the unique contribution that each of the team members brings to the table.

- C. In the process members of the team shape and mold (perhaps even adjust) each other as they bring definition to the vision.

- D. In the process members of the team grow in their friendship and relationship with each other.

Taking the time for this exercise provides an opportunity for team members to build healthier, stronger relationships with one another, to reaffirm their collective purpose, and to plan steps to improve team effectiveness.

- E. In the process individual members of the team buy into the vision just because they have had a hand in the definition of the vision.

People will not own a vision unless they have had a part in shaping it.

- F. In the process the individual members will become more committed to the vision, to each other and to the leader of the organization.

## **VI. What is the practical process involved in creating a team vision?**

- A. The process begins with an understanding of how vision is imparted.

1. The vision of the local church must begin with God, because every local church is to be an instrument of God for the fulfilling of His eternal purpose.

Therefore, whatever vision any local church may have must be measured against and be consistent with God's eternal purpose which has already been revealed in the Bible.

2. God's vision for a local church is imparted to the mind and heart of the senior pastor in a similar way in which God gave a vision and charge to Moses in the "church in the wilderness."

Therefore, the senior pastor receives his vision from God and His word and articulates that vision to and instills that vision in those that have been raised up or disciplined by him. Throughout the Bible, it is the pattern of God that He speaks to the leadership who then transmits it to the people. There is no scriptural record that it has been the other way round.

"Leaders establish the vision for the future and set the strategy for getting there; they cause change. They motivate and inspire others to go in the right direction and they, along with everyone else, sacrifice to get there."

—John Kotter

3. God's vision for a local church is "caught" by the eldership and leadership team who, by virtue of their submission to God and His ordained leadership, may confirm, clarify and enhance the vision that they have embraced.
4. God's vision for a local church is further communicated and refined as the leadership team presents a unified voice to the individual members of the local church. The vision is trumpeted by the senior pastor, confirmed by other leaders and received by those who have identified themselves with the local assembly.
5. God's vision is extended beyond the walls of the church as individual members who have "caught" the vision interface with the members of the community, reach out in love and evangelism, witness in the marketplace and take the message of the kingdom to other cities and nations of the world.

- B. The process continues as the team seeks to define and articulate that vision.

“The process of developing a team mission statement can be difficult and time-consuming. Developing a team mission statement is not an exact science. You are simply fleshing out the distinctive competencies and primary reason for existence of your team. Identifying your distinctive competence is important as it enables the team to focus its energies and resources to move in a particular direction and continuously build upon its strengths.” –Shelley Holmes

1. Adequate time must be set aside for this purpose.
  - a. This discussion should not be squeezed into the normal meeting schedule.
  - b. This discussion is best done in serious blocks of time.
  - c. This discussion should not be rushed for best result.
2. The leader should set the stage for discussion.
  - The leader should set everyone at ease.
  - The leader should frame in the discussion and define the purpose.
  - The leader should consider appointing a discussion leader other than him or herself (this can cause people to open up more).
  - The leader should assign a note taker to record pertinent comments.
3. The discussion leader should ask questions of people to provoke discussion.

In a sense this is nothing more than a brainstorming session where there are no right or wrong answers.

- a. What are some words that you feel are important in defining who we are?
- b. What would you tell someone who asked, “Why do we exist as a church?”
- c. When you talk about our church to others, what are the selling features?
- d. What makes us unique or different from any other church?

In this discussion the note taker should circle the recurring words in people’s comments which become the “power words.”

4. The leader should encourage members of the team to construct a statement of vision to be presented to the rest of the group (the next time you meet).

The statements should follow these guidelines:

- a. They should be relatively short.
- b. They should include some of the “power words” from the discussion.
- c. They should be clear.
- d. They should be vivid.

- e. They should be concise.
- f. They should be inspiring.
- g. They should be memorable.

You might want to give the team sample statements from other churches and ministries to inspire their thought processes.

5. The leader should allow members to read their statements in turn at the next meeting set aside for this purpose.
  - a. The person should read it to the group.
  - b. The person should entertain questions from the group.
  - c. The person should be prepared to clarify, explain his reasoning behind or defend the statement.
  - d. It is important that no judgment be made on any one statement at this point.
  - e. After everyone has shared their statements they should be collected and compiled for the entire group to study.
6. The leader should appoint a smaller group to present some proposed wording at the next meeting.

At this meeting all of the statements from the previous meeting can be passed out as well.

7. The leader should guide the group to a general consensus.
8. The final statement should be worked and reworked to achieve the best possible word choices for the purpose of all future communication.

## Lesson 18

### The Importance of Values

“The most important single element of any corporate, congregational, or denominational culture, however, is the value system.” –Lyle Schaller

In this session we are moving into the second part of the course dealing with the subject of values. Let me begin by recommending a very good book on the subject of values written by Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership*. Many of the thoughts in the next few lessons have been influenced by the reading of this book.

I would like to begin the discussion of values by reviewing and expanding on some of the material from Lesson 13-14 on the components of vision. In that lesson we talked about the five main tools or components of vision that will assist in bringing one’s vision to fulfillment or completion. These five tools were:

- A Concise Mission Statement
- A Consistent Vision Statement
- Long Term and Short Term Goals
- Clearly Articulated Values
- Appropriate Strategies or Methodologies

In the introduction of his book, Malphurs quotes a statement by Bill Hybels that “twenty-first-century leaders will not lead by the authority of their position but by an ability to articulate a vision and the core values of their organization or congregation.”

#### **I. What are values and their primary characteristics?**

##### **A. What are values?**

1. Values are ideals that are accepted by a person or a group.

These values may be clearly articulated in oral or written form or they may simply be understood. These values may have been intentionally created or they may have been unconsciously shaped. In some cases they may have evolved without much conscious effort.

- a. Each individual has a set of values by which they function.
- b. Corporate entities (e.g. businesses, churches, charities, etc.) also function with a set of values. Often these values are represented in an official code of ethics.

2. Values are core beliefs to which people have an emotional bond.

They have an emotional bond to them because they are shaped by forces that have a great deal of emotion attached to them (parents, religious experience, etc.). We will talk about this more later.

3. Values are underlying principles and convictions that shape a person's views of right and wrong.

You notice that we said their "views" of right and wrong. Not everyone views behavior the same way. For some people certain things are clearly wrong while for others they are either right or "simply not wrong."

For some people abortion is an acceptable way to deal with an unwanted pregnancy. For others all abortions are wrong for any reason. The reason people can have passionate feelings on both sides of an issue goes directly to their root or their core values.

4. Values are guiding principles that determine what is desirable in life especially as it pertains to personal conduct.

#### **B. What are the characteristics of values and value statements?**

1. Values are not a measure of what is right or wrong.

Values are not intrinsically good or bad. Values are subjective and often shaped by our culture, education or parents. The values of a Christian should be based on the principles of the Word of God found in the Bible.

2. Values affect behavior.

Values determine why you do what you do in any given scenario. Values and conscience are closely related. Our conscience is shaped by the values that have been put into us over time. If a value is genuine, you do not have to think too much about it when making choices. Your values naturally underlie all that you do.

3. Values are unique and personal.

Values may vary from person to person and organization to organization. Sometimes the value system of a person or organization is referred to as their spiritual DNA. It is often the thing that defines them and makes them unique from all others of the same kind.

"A ministry based on clearly articulated core values drives a fixed stake in the ground that says to all, 'This is what we stand for; this is what we are all about; this is who we are; this is what we can do for you.'" Malphurs, page 14

Points to ponder:

- Does everyone in your organization share the same values?
- Is everyone in the organization committed to the values at the same level?
- Is their cooperation with the values based in compliance or conviction?
- Can every member of the organization passionately communicate the values to others?

4. Values do not define the work, but influence how we go about our work.

Two people or organizations can face the same task or mission, but they may go about how they do it in a totally different way. They do this because they have a different set of values.

What is valued in an organization or a church will affect how ministry is done.

- a. How is worship done?
- b. How is evangelism done?
- c. How is children's ministry done?
- d. How is the service conducted?
- e. How are the finances spent?
- f. How are the poor served?
- g. How do we interface with the community?

## **II. Where do our values come from?**

- A. An individual's values have been shaped by many things (consciously and unconsciously).
  1. Our values are shaped by our parents.
  2. Our values are shaped by our culture.
  3. Our values are shaped by our experience.
    - a. This includes educational experiences.
    - b. This includes religious experiences.
    - c. This includes role models (coaches, pastors, teachers, celebrities, etc.).
    - d. This includes our peer groups.
- B. An organization's values come from several sources.
  1. Its values can be shaped by the founder of the organization.
  2. Its values can be shaped by the history and founding roots of the organization (the sending church).
  3. Its values can be shaped by new leadership with new passions.
- C. Our values need to be shaped and reshaped by the word of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

## **III. Why are the values of an organization so important?**

- A. Values are important because they either draw people or repel people.



In some ways it is important to let people know who you are early on so that they can make a decision early in their experience of the church. Not everyone will be excited with your values or your vision.

When your stated values continually challenge people to abandon, compromise or forsake their own personal values they will be repelled by those values and may choose to go a different direction.

When your stated values continually reinforce, support and promote their values they will be drawn in.

- B. Values are important because people determine their level of participation based on their level of agreement with demonstrated values.

When your values are clearly stated, they can be used to inspire members, volunteers and staff members. They can also be used to screen potential staff members. The more that people share the corporate values personally the more motivated they will be in whatever they do in the organization.

When people value the same thing as the organization values, they more readily commit their time, talent and treasure. They are actually energized by a cause that is important to them. However, those values must be real values in that they are not just written values but they actually govern the practices of the church.

- C. Values are important because they dictate how the use of resources is going to be prioritized.

Every person or organization has a limited amount of resources. For churches this includes resources of money, resources of time and resources of people. All churches use or expend all of their resources on something.

1. How is the money to be allocated? What department gets the biggest piece of the pie?
2. What will be the focus of our time and energy? What programs of the church will receive the most visibility?
3. How will we prioritize the use of volunteers?
4. What functions of the church absolutely must get done? What can be seen as optional?

- D. Values are important because they provide an anchor in stressful times.

1. They help us to deal with change by providing a constant that does not change.
2. They give us strength when tempted to compromise in hard times.
3. They guide our decisions when the hard decisions must be made.

- E. Values are important because they justify your existence as an organization.

There are many churches in the world today, why should you exist? Why should you start a new church in a given community? Why should people come to your church? What distinguishes you from all of the others?

Often the answer to these questions is not about the Great Commission (which is common to most churches) or the programs of the church (which may be similar to several others), it is about what you value. It is about how you go about what you do and why you do things the way that you do. It is about your ministry philosophy.

The fact is, even churches that belong to the same denomination can be vastly different in ministry values and philosophy. This is why church mergers are not always successful. You are often trying to merge two groups of people with different core values.

- F. Values are important because they help to unify the organization.

In this sense the values serve in a similar way to a clear vision in that every department of the organization should reflect these core values so that there is an organic unity from top to bottom in the organization.

Every department should work from values to function. We do not define our values based on our ministries or functions. These values become criteria to evaluate every endeavor to be sure that what we are doing is consistent throughout.

#### **IV. How do clearly articulated core values promote vision fulfillment?**

The core values of an organization are shared values that serve as a basis for our work and conduct. They are those primary principles or ideals that we have defined as the “non-negotiables” in our life and ministry. They are the solid ground for which we are prepared to live and die regardless of the changes in society, government or technology.

- A. They help us to determine the means by which we will progress.

- B. They help guide us in the decision making process.

5. Decisions are deemed positive when they reinforce ministry vision, core values and doctrinal beliefs based on the Scriptures.
6. Decisions are deemed negative when they lead us to compromise vision, core values and doctrinal beliefs based on the Scriptures.

- C. They help us to filter our options.

1. Options in problem solving.
  2. Options in fund raising efforts.
  3. Options in conflict resolution.
  4. Options in staffing our programs.
  5. Options in capital purchases and building plans.
- D. They help us to determine the strategies and programs to achieve vision.
- E. They help us articulate who we are and what we truly stand for.
- F. They help us to bring others into our vision.
- G. They help us to know what to celebrate or reward in the process.
- H. They help us to explain why we do things the way we do.

## Lesson 19-20

### Identifying and Stating Core Values

#### I. How are values to be distinguished from other related concepts?

Before we can effectively identify and state our values, we must distinguish between values and other similar concepts.

##### A. Your values are not the same as your mission.

You recall that we defined mission as your purpose and the reason for your existence. Your values play a big role in making you who you are and determining the kind of vision that you will have. Your values help to shape those things that are important to you.

A mission statement is a brief, written statement reflecting the primary purpose for which the organization has been established. A mission statement answers the question, “Why do we exist?” A good mission statement should spell out the overall goal.

##### B. Your values are not the same as your vision.

You recall that we defined your vision as a clear, concrete guiding picture of the results or condition you want to achieve. It is a mental image of what the future will look like. Your values will play a big role in identifying the specific targets toward which your vision is directed.

Malphurs in his book *Values-Driven Leadership* says it this way, “an organization is vision focused and values driven...The vision clarifies the destination; the values propel the ministry toward that destination” (page 32).

A vision statement is brief paragraph reflecting the translation of the organization’s mission into a specific description and details of the desired outcomes creating a concrete image of the target or destination. A vision statement answers the question, “What are we going to do?” A vision statement paints a picture of the future look of the organization.

##### C. Your values are not the same as your goals.

You recall that we defined a goal is a long or short term target or proposal that you place in front of yourself as a specific step or challenge toward accomplishing your vision and ultimate purpose. Every purpose or stage in vision development is realized by setting and accomplishing specific shorter range goals.

Your values will play a big role in keeping your long and short term goals consistent and faithful with who you are as a person.

##### D. Your values are not the same as your strategies.

As you recall a strategy is a systematic and concrete plan of action designed to achieve a specific goal. A strategy is a means by which a vision is realized. It is a means for getting from here to there. Your strategies answer the question, “How are we going to achieve our vision?”

Your values ensure that the strategies that you employ to achieve your goals, your mission and vision are consistent. They help to define why we have chosen to employ certain strategies and why we have rejected others.

- E. Your values are not the same as your doctrinal statements.

We have not discussed doctrinal statements up to this point. Doctrinal statements are summaries of the main teachings of the Bible on specific themes (God, Man, Sin, Satan, Etc.; See Appendix). There is no question that our theological understanding of the Bible will have a strong influence in the shaping of our values. However, you can have values without a doctrinal statement of any kind.

For the Christian there is often a strong overlap of our doctrinal beliefs and our values. This is often directly related to what your doctrine of the Scripture actually looks like. For those who hold a very high view of inspiration, almost all of their values come from the pages of the Bible.

- F. Your values are the underlying ideas, convictions or core beliefs that support, shape and influence your ministry philosophy and stand behind all that you do.

Everyone has values of one sort or another. However, not everyone has defined their mission, vision, goals and strategies. Values answer the question, “Why are we doing what we are doing in the way that we are doing it?”

## **II. Why is it important to state values?**

- A. Stated values can help us to better understand who we are as people and as organizations.

There are some well known statements that reflect on this thought.

1. “Know thyself!” (Plato).

We obviously know ourselves better than anyone else. However, most of us have not reflected on why we are the way we are. We have not identified the reasons why we feel the way we do about certain things. Going through the exercise of identifying and stating value helps you to better know who you are and makes it easier for you to explain yourself and your actions to others.

2. “To thy own self be true” (Shakespeare).

We all function best when we are doing what we were created to do. This is true of individuals and organizations. It is in this realm that we have the best chance of success.

- B. Stated values can be a way to attract and influence followers with shared values.

By stating your values it saves people time in getting to know you and determining whether or not their values are consistent with your values.

- C. Stated values can serve as a way to measure one's compatibility with an organization.

Styles and methods of doing things can often be very flexible as long as we are all operating from the same set of core beliefs or values. There is more than one way to accomplish vision. But if the core beliefs of those participating in the process are not compatible there will be constant conflict with and chafing against each other as we walk out the vision.

- D. Stated values can serve as points of dialog to bring unity to a ministry team or organization.

One of the ways to bring unity to a team is by creating an environment where core values can be discussed. In the context of such discussion it is actually possible for people to experience a shift in their perspective. In this context people can grow in their understanding and appreciation for each other.

- E. Stated values can assist the custodians of the vision in settling conflicts that arise in a ministry team or organization.

Many conflicts arise out of misunderstandings. Quarreling or territorial disputes between people can often be resolved by pointing to the stated values of an organization.

- F. Stated values can serve as reference points that can be used by team members in making decisions or explaining to others why we do things the way we do them.

- G. Stated values can help to ensure that all of the key participants in the vision are communicating in similar ways.

- H. Stated values become points of accountability for those who are responsible for the outworking of the vision of the organization.

### **III. What are the different types of values that must be considered when developing value statements?**

Malphurs in his book *Values-Driven Leadership* mentions six different kinds of values that exist in tension with each other (pages 48-57). In this course I want to discuss four of them.

- A. There are conscious versus unconscious values.

Everyone begins with unconscious values. Some, however, seek to identify and articulate those values. Malphurs points out the value of articulating values by distinguishing between those who do and those who don't.

1. Those who have taken the time to identify and articulate values tend to be proactive in their leadership style.

In this case the actions of the leaders tend to be determined by such things as purpose, vision, mission, values and design. These leaders are able to control their reactions by submitting them to the filter they have constructed in their values.

2. Those who have not specifically identified their values tend to be reactive in their leadership style.

In this case the actions of the leader tend to be determined by moods, feelings, impulses, circumstances and other external factors.

B. There are shared versus unshared values.

Having shared values is the key to people working together successfully in unity for a common cause. When a church or organization is made up of people who do not share common values, members of the organization tend to pull in different directions or entertain different solutions. This can lead to a splintering of the organization into different camps. In the case of a local church, this condition can eventually lead to a church split.

C. There are personal versus organizational values.

Everyone has personal values. However, when an organization is formed there is also a set of values that can define the organization. The more our personal values line up with the organizational values the stronger our commitment will be to the overall purpose of the organization.

Very few organizations will be made up of people whose personal values line up in every respect to that of the organization. In this case people must be able to give a little for the sake of a higher goal.

However, when a person is part of an organization that shares very few of their personal values, the chance of them remaining a part of the organization for the long term is very small.

D. There are congruent versus incongruent values.

Congruent values are values that line up or are consistent with the expressed mission and vision of the organization. They are also values that line up with all of the other values. If our values are in conflict we will not be able to move ahead and fulfill the expressed vision of the organization.

We may say that one of our values is strengthening the families of the church. In actual practice, we may keep the people so busy with services that we also see as important that there is no time for the family. We have conflicting values.

#### **IV. What are some of the things that we have learned about core values that will affect the stating of our values?**

While many things are important as we seek to define and articulate our values, there are two things that need some reminder.

- A. Values are personal; therefore, you cannot just adopt someone else's list and call it your own.

It is easy to surf the net, read books or go to conferences and draw from what others have done. If we are not careful we will try to determine our values based on the work that others have done. This research may be a good source of ideas, but if the values that we put down are not our own it will be very difficult to function within the context of those values. It will be much like little David trying to wear Saul's armor.

- B. Values must actual; therefore, they cannot just be a wish list.

If your program or what you are presently doing does not line up with your core values, what you think are core values are most likely not be *true* core values. Our values are not just a wish list. They must represent our inner heart and passions.

Perhaps we need to challenge some of those inner beliefs. Perhaps we need God to change our heart, but wherever our heart is, that is where our treasure (investment) will be.

#### **V. What is the process of discovering your values?**

The process of discovering core values can be done by an individual, a local church or any other type of organization. The pursuit of personal values is a highly personal process and involves some personal soul searching.

However, on an organizational level, many existing organizations did not begin with clearly stated values. In this case the identification or the discovery of values can be a valuable experience for the leadership team of an organization. The discovery of corporate values can be turned into a group project that begins with the senior leader and the senior leadership team of that corporate entity.

- A. The first step in the process is to make time for the exercise.

There is great value in making this a team exercise. When opportunity is given for key leaders to participate in the process of discovery they are more likely to



own the results and participate with much higher levels of commitment and passion.

Note: Before going any further in the process it would be good to appoint a note taker so that key elements of the discussions can be recorded and common threads can be identified.

- B. Another step or activity in the process is to look inward at what the organization is presently doing.

Many times our values are being expressed unconsciously; by looking inward at what we are presently doing we can actually work backward and try to discover our rationale for what we are doing.

One exercise that can be done is to look at everything that is being done in the major departments of the organization and answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think that we are doing this?
2. Can anyone give us the history of this function and how it got started?
3. Do we still have the same sense about this activity?
4. How would you express a core belief or value that led to the development of or is reflected by this function?

- C. Another step or activity in the process is to ask each of the key players to list words about the organization that they think describe the organization.

These words will reflect the personality traits of the organization which are often keys to unconscious core values.

- D. Another step or activity in the process is to seek to answer some basic question about yourself or your organization.

There are some questions that you can ask that will help you to identify core values. Here are some samples:

1. Can you identify some things about you, your ministry or your local church that make you distinct from other ministries or local churches in your area?
2. If you did not personally plant the church you are attending, what are some of the reasons why you chose to be a part of that church?
3. When you tell people about your church or organization, what do you see as the selling points?
4. Can you identify a value that in your mind you could never compromise to maintain your present ministry involvement? If so, what would that value be?
5. What is it about the organization and its work that makes you the most proud to be involved? Fulfilled? Motivated?

6. What is it about the organization and its work that makes you the most concerned? Least fulfilled? Least motivated?
  7. What changes have you made in the last two years in your organization, local church or ministry? Why did you make those changes?
  8. What changes would you make to the organization if it were in your power to do so? Why would you make those changes?
  9. Can you identify a value that has shifted or changed in your life? Why do you think the change occurred?
  10. What do you believe is the most important thing to this organization and its focus?
- E. Another step or activity in the process is to look at the church's or organization's budget and see where your present ministry focus is expressed.

There are some questions that you can ask that might serve as clues to identifying your core values.

1. Where are most of your resources invested? Why do you think this is the case?
  2. What seems to motivate people to give to the organization more than anything else? Why do you think this is the case?
- F. Another step or activity in the process is to have the group assign a value to various aspects of the organizational life that have been referenced in all previous discussions.

Throughout all of these exercises someone should be assigned to take notes. In taking notes they should be listening for common themes that come through the discussion. The note taker should be able to list some words or concepts that are continually repeated. Once this list is compiled, it can be given to each member of the team to prioritize by assigning a numerical value to each word or concept.

For example:

- \_\_\_ People are Important
- \_\_\_ Reaching the Lost/Evangelism
- \_\_\_ Servanthood
- \_\_\_ Integrity
- \_\_\_ The Word of God
- \_\_\_ Discipleship
- \_\_\_ Worship
- \_\_\_ Transforming Society
- \_\_\_ Social Justice
- \_\_\_ Ministry to Poor
- \_\_\_ Missions
- \_\_\_ Prayer

- \_\_\_\_\_ Teaching
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Importance of the Church
- \_\_\_\_\_ Excellence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Generosity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Team Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cultural Relevance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fellowship
- \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Community
- \_\_\_\_\_ Life Change
- \_\_\_\_\_ Authenticity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Counseling
- \_\_\_\_\_ Character
- \_\_\_\_\_ Church Planting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Others, Etc.

On this list there happens to be 28 items plus the “others” category. Once you finish your list you can encourage each member of the group to number these concepts one through twenty-eight based on what they perceive to be the order of importance in the organization. After everyone has completed the exercise the number can be tallied to determine the corporate value that the group places on these entries. From this you should be able to prioritize key concepts that will later translate into value statements.

## **VI. How do you develop value statements from the gathered data?**

From the previous exercises you should be able to proceed to the construction of values statements.

### **A. Determine whether or not the concept is an individual or a corporate value.**

We talked about this distinction earlier. Not every person who is involved in the organization will share every personal value that they have with every other person in the organization. Obviously, the more common ground that they share the greater power and unity they will have.

It is critical in any organization that the “person at the top” of the organization embrace all of those things identified as core values. Whoever serves as the voice of the organization must be able to passionately preach the vision and the values to the members of the organization with a deep sense of conviction.

### **B. Determine how many of the concepts discussed are actually the core values.**

Core values are not arbitrary and only applied to certain aspects of the organization. If something is a core value it should be able to be overlaid over every department within the organization and everything that the organization does.

Malphurs in this book *Values-Driven Leadership* offers the following seven tests of a good core value (Pgs. 69-72).

1. A good core value is biblical.

Whether you are an individual, a local church, a business or some other kind of organization, if you are a Christians, your values should be based on the Bible. If Christ is the center of our lives and Christ is the “Word made flesh” we should be very concerned that our values line up with the clearly revealed word of God.

a. This means that we value what God values.

As we formulate our values they should be based on God’s value system. For most of the core values that we list we should be able to cite a scripture reference that affirms or supports it.

b. This means that what we value does not conflict with what God values.

It is possible to have a core value that is not directly discussed in the Bible (e.g. creativity, flexibility). While the actual word that you are looking for may not be found in your translation of the Bible, the concept is often found in what is exemplified and praised. In any case, our core value should never violate a clear directive from the Word of God.

2. A good core value engenders passion.

A good core value can become a rallying point and something that separates your church or organization from other similar organizations. A good core value will attract people who are passionate about some of the same things. It will become something worth fighting and living for.

3. A good core value is shared.

If a core value is to truly characterize any organization it must be shared by a broad number of people in the organization. If after discussion you find that what you have perceived to be a core value is not shared equally by others in key roles, it may suggest one of two things.

a. It may suggest that you have taken this core value for granted and have not imparted it to key team members.

b. It may suggest that you are not dealing with a core value at all. Perhaps what you perceive as a core value on an organizational level is really only a core value on a personal level.

4. A good core value is constant.

A good core value will stand the test of time. This is why it is so critical to separate core values from goals, strategies and programs. Goals, strategies and programs will change over time and in relation to changing circumstances, but core values should not be given to such change.

This does not mean that we will never change a core value as we grow in our relationship to the Lord, but it helps us to understand that core values go to the center of who we are and why we function the way that we do. A core value is something that you would not give up even in the face of persecution.

- a. Job is a good example (Job 27:1-6, NIV).

*And Job continued his discourse: "As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul, as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit. I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live."*

- b. Peter and the apostles were good examples (Acts 4:18-20; 5:40-42).

*"But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

Acts 4:17-20

*And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Acts 5:40-42*

5. A good core value can be clearly expressed.

If a core value is going to have any usefulness in an organization it must be understood and accepted by a growing consensus of those involved in the implementation of the vision. In order to be clearly understood it must be expressed or articulated clearly.

This is why it is a valuable exercise to work on the wording and stating of the core values. When these core values are put into a format that is consistent and clear, the values are more likely to be repeated and passed on throughout the organization.

If those at the top are hazy about the core values, they will only get hazier as the information is passed along to others.

6. A good core value is congruent with other values.

All of the core values need to mesh perfectly. If there is a conflict it will produce the same result as double-mindedness. One member or department within the organization will be in constant strife with another.

7. A good core value is implementable.

Malphurs puts it this way, “An individual or organization must be able to implement every value embraced. A value that is not workable is a liability, not an asset. To commit to that which you cannot accomplish is to commit to failure. That is why it is so important that key beliefs be congruent and clear. These kinds of values have great potential for realization. Values that are contradictory and unclear have no potential for realization.” (Pg. 71-72).

C. Determine the format of the value statements.

In other words how are you actually going to express the core values in terms of wording and structure?

Most core value statements can be broken down into three parts, the statement of the value, the explanation or amplification of the value and the biblical support for or validation of the value.

For each of these parts the wording should be as consistent and as parallel as possible for the greatest collective impact.

1. The statement of the value

The statement of value which is sometimes referred to as the introduction of the value should be composed of one to four words.

Here are a few examples:

**Example 1**

- Committed to God’s Word
- Committed to Purpose
- Committed to People
- Committed to Relationships
- Committed to Excellence
- Committed to Growth

**Example 2**

We value...

- Preaching the Word
- Fellowship
- Prayer
- Worship
- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- Team Ministry

## 2. The amplification of the value

After the introduction of the value, it should be followed by one to three sentences explaining or amplifying the value in real terms.

## 3. The support for the value

Within the text of the explanation you can include one or two key Bible verses that most directly relate to the value that is being expressed.

### **Example:**

The following example is taken from a core values statement from Lakeview Community Church in Cedar Hill, Texas.

#### **A Commitment to Prayer**

We believe that God desires His people to pray and that He hears and answers prayer (Mt. 7:7-11; Jam. 5:13-18). Therefore, the ministries and activities of this church will be characterized by a reliance on prayer in their conception, planning and execution.

In all of these stages the wording should be worked and reworked so that the best possible word choices can be made and the value can be communicated in the most efficient way.

For a full example of a Core Value Statement see **Appendix II** of this lesson.

## D. Give all of the developed core value statement the core values test (Covered under point “B.” of this section).

In addition to the previous tests, if the core values statements are well written, they should do three things as noted by Malphurs in *Values-Driven Leadership* (Pg. 94-95):

1. They should attract interest.
2. They should instill pride.
3. They should communicate accurately.

## Appendix I, Lesson 18 – Sample Core Value Statement

The following statement was adopted by Woodbridge Christian Church.

# CORE VALUES STATEMENT of Woodbridge Christian Church

Our core values are the key driving beliefs that guide our decision-making, determine our priorities, inspire us to action, and distinguish our ministry from others. Because Jesus said the two greatest commandments were to love God and love our neighbor (Matt. 22:34-40), we have grouped our core values under those two categories.

## Our Relationship with God

### ***We value loving God.***

Our ultimate purpose as a church is to declare our adoration for God. We are centered around God the Father, founded on God the Son, and led by God the Spirit. *Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:18*

### ***We value the authority of Scripture.***

Our final authority in matters of faith and practice is the Bible in which God has revealed his will for us. Because we love God, we obey his commands. The teaching of the Bible takes precedence over church traditions or human opinions. We obey no creed but Christ and no book but the Bible. Where Scripture speaks, we speak; where Scripture is silent, we are silent. *2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Jn. 5:2-3*

### ***We value salvation by grace.***

Our salvation is a gift of God's kindness that we have done nothing to deserve. We receive that gift by believing, confessing our faith, repenting, and being baptized. Our gratitude for God's acceptance causes us to adhere to our other core values. *Gal. 2:15-16; Eph. 2:4-10*

### ***We value the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.***

Our love for God and respect for his Word cause us to obey his commands concerning the practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper. As Christ commanded, we baptize by immersion only those who can make their own decision of faith and repentance. We offer the Lord's Supper during each worship service so that God's people can draw closer to Christ and to his followers. *Matt. 26:26-29; 28:18-20*

### ***We value sacrificial service to God.***

Our experience of grace causes us to respond with unrestricted devotion, unwavering commitment, and diligent service to God. We willingly and joyfully sacrifice our time, money, and talents to promote his purpose in the world. Because he has redeemed us, we are his servants. *Matt. 16:24-26; Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 3:8-9*

### ***We value prayer.***

Prayer is the means by which we deepen our relationship with God. In prayer, we praise God, thank him for his blessings, confess our sins, seek his help, and intercede for others. *Matt. 7:7-11; Col. 4:2*

### ***We value allegiance to Christ alone.***

Because Christ is the head of the church, we manage our affairs without interference from other human authorities. Like the churches of the New Testament, we cooperate with other churches in various ministries, but no other church or organization controls our affairs. We refer to ourselves only as Christians not because we are the only Christians but because we are Christians only. *Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18*



## **Our Relationship with People**

### ***We value loving our neighbor.***

Our experience of God's loving grace causes us to share his love with others by encouraging them, healing their hurts, and meeting their needs. We place the needs of others before our own needs. *Matt. 22:39; Jn. 13:34-35; Rom. 13:8-10*

### ***We value building healthy relationships.***

Those who have been united with Christ are also united with each other. We seek to strengthen the relationships within the body of Christ so that God's people will support each other and minister to each other. We promote strong marriages, healthy families, and deep friendships. *Acts 2:44-47; 1 Cor. 12:12-27*

### ***We value equipping every member for ministry.***

Every Christian has received a gift of the Holy Spirit that enables him or her to serve others. We assist people in discovering their gifts, we guide them in selecting an area of service, and we equip them to serve effectively. *1 Cor. 12:7-11; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 2:4-5; 4:10-11*

### ***We value godly leadership.***

God has gifted certain people with the ability to equip believers to carry out their ministry. We select people to serve as elders who are spiritually mature and who have the gifts to serve as leaders. These leaders exhort and encourage others to continue to grow in Christ. They set an example of Christ-like living. They guide the church by discerning God's will and by persuading the church to follow his will. *Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Pet. 5:1-4*

### ***We value evangelism and missions.***

God has given the church the mission of making disciples of all nations. We encourage our members to share their faith with others. We offer ministries that will meet the needs of the unsaved so that they will become open to the gospel. We support missionaries and other organizations that promote the spread of the gospel around the world. *Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-21*

### ***We value the relevance of the gospel.***

The gospel itself is a timeless message that never changes, but the forms and methods used to spread the gospel are adapted to the needs, interests, and understanding of the unchurched. While we cannot reduce the difficulty of accepting the gospel message itself, we do not increase its difficulty by expecting unchurched people to adapt themselves to our customs and language. As servants, we willingly adapt ourselves to the needs and understanding of those who do not yet know Christ. *Mk. 4:33-34; 1 Cor. 9:19-23*

### ***We value unity on the essentials of faith.***

Our efforts at evangelism depend on our unity. We believe Christians should be united on the central doctrines of the faith that are clearly expressed in Scripture. We also accept diversity of opinion on matters that are not essential to the faith or matters that are not directly addressed by Scripture. Our motto is "in essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, love." *Jn. 17:20-23; Rom. 14:1-21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:3*

## **Lesson 21**

### **Communicating and Implementing Values**

“A leader could develop the perfect values statement for an organization. It could meet or even excel all the requirements in the last chapter. That leader could read through the credo and be struck, even emotionally overwhelmed, by its excellence. He or she might even stand back, shake the head, and say, ‘Wow, this is outstanding!’ However, if the ministry’s constituency does not know what those values are, if the leader has not taken the time to clearly communicate them, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the organization to implement them.” --Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership*, pg. 99

#### **I. How are values to be communicated within the organization?**

The primary way that values are communicated within the organization is much the same as was discussed in Lesson 15 when we talked about the communication of vision. It would be good to review that material in the context of values’ communication.

In that lesson we discussed the following ways of communicating vision:

- Oral
- Written
- Visual
- Example
- Modeling
- Celebrating

In addition there are some other things that will contribute to the spreading of the values within the organization. Some of these processes are more formalized, while others are more informal.

A. There are formal processes for the communication of values.

##### **1. Within the leadership**

It is good to have times with the leadership team that help to affirm and strengthen the commitment to the value statements. In this regard it is valuable to schedule regular times where the discussion of core values is a planned event.

- a. Including the leadership in the initial formulation of the value statements (See Lesson 18).
- b. Creating an environment where the following questions can be discussed among the leadership team.
  - How are you personally communicating the values in your sphere of influence?

- What are some of the creative methods that you have employed to reinforce the values?
- Do you sense that any of our values are being neglected, misunderstood or growing tired?
- How can we enhance, clarify, freshen up or rekindle these values?

2. Within the staff

- a. Formal teachings where core values are amplified should be shared in staff development times.
- b. Using staff times to discuss the following questions highlighting one value at a time.
  - How passionate are you in relation to this value?
  - Is there anything about this value that you feel you do not quite understand?
  - How are you communicating this value in your department?
  - What is the evidence that people understand the value in your department?
  - What are some new and creative ways that you can communicate this value within your department?
  - How can I make this value “fun” in my department.

3. Within the organization in general

- a. The values should be preached by the senior leadership of the organization.

This should be something that is done on a regular basis. If something is an actual core value then it needs to be taught repeatedly so that everyone who regularly comes to the church will hear it over time. The goal is to create a culture that has thoroughly consistent values.

Ask yourself the question, “When was the last time this value was preached publically?”

Many pastors struggle trying to decide what to preach. Preaching the core values in some form every year is a great way to keep the church activated.

- b. The values should be highlighted in all new member orientations.
- c. The values should be demonstrated in the outworking of all of the programs of the church or organization.
- d. The values should be lived by the leadership and official staff of the church.

If the values are not practiced on the senior levels of the organizational life, it will effectively nullify all of the other forms of communication and will most likely create a major opportunity for division within the organization.

In the other hand, when the values are freely practiced by those at the top of an organization it will have the effect of empowering, validating and accelerating all of the other forms of communication.

B. There are informal processes for the communication of values.

In the book *Shaping Strategic Planning*, by Pfeiffer, Goodstein and Nolan they indentify three primary means of informal communication within an organization—story tellers, priests and whisperers (page 109).

While these communicators of the values are labeled as “informal” they are at the same time vital if the values are going to be perpetuated successfully.

1. Storytellers

Storytellers are people within the organization who usually have some history with the organization who love to tell stories of the past. They are to the organization what the elders of a primitive people group who function without a written tradition are to the tribe. They pass down the culture of the group or tribe through lore.

Lore is defined as “all the facts and traditions about a particular subject that have been accumulated over time through education or experience” (Wikipedia).

Storytellers love to keep the stories of the organization’s heroes alive by telling and retelling. As Malphurs says, “These heroes are people, usually leaders, who have modeled the values during times of struggle as well as times of prosperity” (page 103).

2. Priests

Priests are both official and unofficial protectors of the core values. Many of the people who fall into this category are either those who established the core values, those who fought for the establishment of the core values or those who were drawn in by virtue of those values. These people have taken full and personal ownership of the values. They believe that the values are vitally important to the ministry success of the individual, the family and the church or organization.

Because these people hold the values passionately, it is hard for them to accept it when people either take the values for granted or act in a way that is contrary to the values. These people may include some of the original founders of the organization, the key implementers of the values or people whose lives have been significantly changed as a result of those values.

Because these individuals see themselves as the protectors or the guardians of the values they are quick to point out when they feel that the values are being confused, misrepresented, ignored, neglected or threatened.

### 3. Whisperers

A whisperer is someone who communicates true or false information in a covert, secret or informal way. Whisperers are often referred to in a negative context and are often linked to such things as slander or gossip; but whisperers can also serve as a very positive force in the dissemination of values within an organization (Pro. 16:28).

*An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.*

Proverbs 16:28

If a whisperer carries a true message they have the ability to take that message where duly appointed leaders may never go. The unique thing about whisperers is that they carry a bit of information that they believe will excite or incite their hearers. If they are indeed passionate about the core values, they will share them in ways that inspire belief.

These informal means of communicating values can only become a reality when the formal means of communicating have properly taken place. The formal process is the fuel for the informal process. The informal process will always go on within an organization whether you want it to or not. However, whether or not the informal process confirms and affirms actual, defined values is linked to how successful the formal process of communication has been.

## II. How can we ensure that core values are implemented?

When we talk about the implementation of the core values we are really talking about strategy. What is our strategy for expressing or supporting these values in this organization?

A. Implementing core values begins with asking ourselves some honest questions.

1. Is this core value expressed openly in what we are presently doing?
2. Is this core value thoroughly expressed in relation to each department or program of the organization?
3. What can be done to integrate this core value into each department?
4. What can remain and what will have to be changed to be more consistent with our core values?

B. Implementing core values requires that we be willing to cut what is not core.

C. Implementing core values must find expression in clear strategies.

It is fine to identify something as a core value, but how is it actually finding expression in what we are doing. Do we have a way to ensure that the value we have expressed is in fact being facilitated by what we do?

The following are a few examples:

1. If our core value is authentic community, what are we doing to promote that value throughout the organization?
  - a. In church programs we have Life Groups.
  - b. In kids programs we have small groups or “cadres.”
  - c. In all departments we have team building and small groups (e.g. Worship Team, Etc.).
2. If our core value is making reproducing disciples, what are we doing to promote that value throughout the organization?
  - a. In church programs we have the Life Track.
  - b. We integrate Life Track material into the children and youth programs.
  - c. We celebrate life change in the corporate meeting.
  - d. We offer further discipleship in specific areas in the Life Groups.
  - e. We encourage the raising up of disciples within departments.
3. If our core value is being a resource church, what are we doing to promote that concept throughout the organization?

The leaders of each department know that whatever we do we are to do with the idea of doing it in a way that can be ultimately shared with others.

- Teaching
- Preaching
- Curriculum
- Music
- Administration
- Etc.

- D. Implementing core values will necessitate leading the organization through the process of change.

## **Lesson 22-23**

### **Introducing New Values**

Because in most cases mission statements, vision statements and values statements are formulated after the local church or organization has already been functioning, it is necessary to discuss how to introduce the new and how to lead the church through change.

#### **I. What is change management?**

Introducing the new often involves the changing of the old. The Bible speaks of the danger of putting new wine into old wineskins (Mt. 9:17).

*Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.*

We will come back to this verse later, but for now it is worthy to note that injecting anything new (new wine) into an already existing structure (wineskin) is a somewhat risky process and must be managed carefully.

Because of the sensitivity of this process it is important to be careful about making any changes. Someone has said, “The only thing that is constant is change.” There is a real truth in this. For this reason good leaders will become skilled at change management.

**“Change management** is the process during which the changes of a system are implemented in a controlled manner by following a pre-defined framework/model with, to some extent, reasonable modifications.” Wikipedia

#### **II. What are some important considerations in the process of managing change?**

There are several things that leaders must take into account in the process of bringing about change.

- A. The leader of change must understand what needs to be changed and why it needs to be changed.

Before any change takes place it is important to understand what needs to be changed and why. We do not change simply for the sake of change. There must be good reasons for making changes.

Before making changes it is good to ask yourself some questions.

- Why do we want to change?
- What do we want to achieve with this change?
- How will we know that true change has been achieved?
- Who will be affected by this change?
- How do we think people will react to this change?

- Am I personally willing to lead the way to change?
- How much of this change can I accomplish by myself?
- Who else do I need on board to affect this change?
- How much time should I allow to make this transition?
- Who needs to know first and when do they need to know?

Some of the reasons for making a change include the following:

1. Change may be needed when the stated vision or values are not the true vision and values of the church.

In other words what is written on the walls is not what is practiced down the halls. Perhaps statements of vision or values were adopted from others but they were never birthed out of the hearts of those who are actually responsible to make decisions and to drive the vision of the church. As a result there is a disparity or a “disconnect” between what is proclaimed and what is practiced.

2. Change may be needed when the vision or values have become tired or outdated.

A tired value is an outdated value that has simply grown old and is in need of freshening up. Refreshing a tired value may simply mean rephrasing the value in more contemporary or relevant terms or it may mean something more drastic such as eliminating the value altogether.

Malphurs in his book *Values-Driven Leadership* highlights seven warning signals of tired values (page 83-84). He indicates that your values need a facelift when...

- a. There is frequent confusion and disagreement among the organizations leaders, top decision makers and constituency as it pertains to programs, techniques, and styles of ministry.
- b. There is overt cynicism and pessimism of many toward the organizations future.
- c. The organization is functioning in maintenance or survival mode.

In this case everyone is totally exhausted and just trying to keep things going.

- d. The church or organization has plateaued or is in a state of decline.
- e. The people who are in the ministry are merely going through the motions with little motivation.

People are involved out of a sense of duty and have lost personal passion.

- f. There is a strong resistance to any change or innovation especially those that call for risk.



Once again, when people are tired they often gain an attitude that says, “We have paid our dues; we have made our sacrifices; we just want to relax and enjoy what we have.”

- g. There is a communication break down between upper level leadership and those who serve in the organization which creates a mistrust of those who are perceived to be “in command.”

- 3. Change may be needed when new revelation has come that will change the way you function.

- a. Perhaps there is something that should be taken away because it is no longer a central belief or core value.

An example of this has to do with an understanding of the place and value placed on buildings and things. There are churches who in their past have valued a cathedral structure, a pipe organ, stained glass windows and other embellishments only to realize that the church is people not a building.

When that value changes, it changes the way things are done and the way things are expressed. One of the challenges of course is that many of the people who will cling to the old are the same people that were instructed by you in the old way. They will not automatically change because you have now changed.

- b. Perhaps there is something that should be added that was not previously being practiced.

Perhaps evangelism has not been happening in the church. In the past it has not been seen as or practiced as a core value. However, new understanding of the commission of Christ has come and with it the realization that every local church has a responsibility to evangelize.

This is then a value that may need to be added and all of the programs of the church need to be examined in the light of this new understanding. As they are reevaluated it will undoubtedly lead to a change in how things are done.

- 4. Change may be needed when the programs of the church are no longer serving the vision or are no longer relevant to the times.

Programs are often begun in at a certain time in relation to a specific culture when the church was a certain size. They may have worked well at the time but things have changed, the church has grown and they no longer achieve what they were originally designed to achieve.

- B. The leader of change must understand the problems associated with the blending of the new with the old.

The Bible gives a couple of illustrations of the problems that can arise with change.

1. Jesus spoke of sewing a new patch on an old garment (Mt. 9:16; Mark 2:21).

*No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.*

“Unshrunk cloth” could be likened to untested ideas blended with the old. Untested ideas that are introduced to fix a problem have the power to do more harm than good.

The word that is used for “new” or “unshrunk” here is a word that means several things.

- a. It is cloth that is not washed or preshrunk before it is sown on.

- b. It is a cloth that is unprocessed before it is sown on.

What is your process for new ideas? Before ideas can be blended into what is already existing they need to go through a process. They need to be washed, tested or proven before they are promoted.

Dick Iverson in his book on *Balance*, suggests that when it comes to new things it is often best to let other try it first.

Ask yourself, “Do I know anyone else who is doing this? What has been their testimony and fruit? Can I learn anything from the process that they went through?”

2. Jesus spoke of pouring new wine into old wineskins (Mt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38).

*And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins. Mark 2:22*

The illustration of pouring new wine into old wineskins demonstrates once again the danger of trying to make changes in an already existing structure. This illustration actually makes two points.

- a. You may have to change more than you think if you are going to inject new ideas or programs into your organization.

You actually may need to change the structure of the organization to accommodate your new idea or program. Any time that structure must be changed to accommodate your new vision or program it will take much longer to lay the foundation for change.

- b. You must take great care if you are trying to introduce new ideas or programs into the existing structure.

It is not that you cannot make changes, but you must realize that great care must be taken in the making of those changes in order to preserve the wineskin.

An old wineskin can be reused for new wine. However, in order for it to be used it must be carefully prepared. The purpose of the preparation process is to restore elasticity to the wineskin that has become somewhat brittle over time. The way this is done is to soak the wineskin in water and rub it with oil.

In the church this speaks of soaking the wineskin in the word of God and allowing the oil of the Holy Spirit to work the word into the hearts and minds of the people. When this is done before change is initiated, the people will adjust to the new idea and may almost demand change based on their new understanding.

- C. The leader of change must understand the nature of pastors and the nature of sheep.

- 1. The nature of pastors or leaders presents its own kind of challenge.

- a. Many pastors begin with a great vision for their ministry and the type of church that they want to produce.
- b. Many pastors want to get to their destination as quickly as possible.
- c. Many pastors fail to lay the proper groundwork for making the necessary changes.
- d. Many pastors try to make too many changes in a short amount of time.
- e. Many pastors, therefore, lose people over each change that they make.

If the pastor or leader is not careful he may write certain people off as the “price of change” or he may develop a bad attitude toward certain people based on their resistance to change. He may even see certain people as “dead wood” that need to be pruned out so the new branches can come forth.

This attitude must be tempered with Jesus’ desire that He not lose anyone that God had placed into His care (John 6:39).

Against the problem in the pastor, we have a problem in the people.

- 2. The nature of people or sheep presents its own kind of challenge.

- a. People tend to love the idea of stability, the “good old days” and traditions, and are prone to resist any change.
- b. People usually change based on three primary motivations for change.

- They change out of desperation—because they have to change.

Jonah would not change until he had paid for his own ticket, gone to the bottom of the boat, was thrown in the sea, descended to the bottom the sea, was swallowed by a whale in the belly and stewed in the whale’s juices for three days.

- They change out of inspiration—because they are emotionally inspired to change.

The crowd on the day of Pentecost who listened to the preaching of Peter were inspired to change by his message (Acts 2:37).

*These words of Peter’s moved them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” --Living Bible*

- They change as a matter of personal discipline—because they want to and, therefore, they choose to change.

Paul indicated that he was willing to do some things because he saw the value in them. He chose to change and he disciplined himself to make those changes regardless of his actual feelings toward those changes (I Cor. 9:27).

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

- c. People cannot change as fast as their leaders are able to change.

- The ability to change quickly is how God keeps leaders in the lead.

Sometimes leaders do not realize that everyone cannot change as fast as they can. God has given those who are called to be leaders an unusual ability or a grace to change quickly. This is not a quality that everyone possesses. Sometimes this ability or grace to change quickly can get them into trouble, because they can move impetuously.

However, on the positive side, it is this quality that keeps them ahead of the people and makes it possible for them to lead and stay out in front of the people.

- The fact that people do not have the ability to change as quickly serves as a built-in check to impetuous leaders.

If people responded too quickly to every idea or thought that was expressed by their leader, the leader would be tempted to implement ideas that had not been thoroughly thought through. In such a case, the fact that a leader knows that he will have to properly bring the people along is a safeguard to foolish or impetuous decisions.

- d. Noble people must be thoroughly convinced from the Scriptures that change is necessary and justified.

Paul had been in Thessalonica and now was in Berea where he was preaching the Gospel to the Jews of that city. This is what Luke recorded about the people who responded to Paul's preaching of this new concept (Acts 17:11):

*These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*

- The people of Berea were more fair-minded (other translations say that they were “of noble disposition”, “of finer spirits”, “a better breed”).
- The people of Berea were people of the Word.

*They searched the Word to find out whether what Paul was saying was indeed true (to verify this new interpretation). –Rieu*

- The people of Berea were not to be considered “rebellious” just because they did not accept everything that Paul said immediately.

#### D. The leader of change must understand and overcome the obstacles to change.

There are many obstacles to change. The older and more established an organization is and the more people that are potentially affected by changes the more obstacles the leader will face. Understanding potential obstacles helps the leader develop a strategy for change that will take some of these things into account.

The following twelve are some of the most common obstacles to change. All of the obstacles are closely related and all of them involve people as opposed to finances and equipment. The biggest obstacles are rarely natural resources but human resources.

##### 1. Love for tradition

This is a love for the “good old days.” This mindset says when confronting the new, “We never did it that way before.”

##### 2. Fear of the unknown

There is a security in the familiar even if it is not the best or most effective. This mindset says, “I would rather stick with what I know, I do not know how I would fit in the new system.”

3. Fear of failure

Fear of failure is one of the strongest fears especially if we have experienced failure in the past. This mindset says, “I do not want to take the risk, we have failed before and we may fail again.”

4. No sense of personal need or urgency

Some people are quite comfortable and since they are happy and fulfilled doing what they are doing, it is difficult for them to see the change from a broader perspective. This mindset says, “I am content with my life I do not see how this change will better my personal situation.”

5. Not understanding why

Most people will not change unless they understand the reasons why we are seeking change or the purpose behind the proposed change. If they do not understand the reasons for the change their mindset will be, “Why do we need to change?”

6. Lack of know-how

Most changes require the use of new systems, new methods and new tools. For some people these changes will seem too complex. Anytime you move outside of your realm of experience you can feel that you are out of your depth. This mindset says, “I like the change but I am not sure how to make it happen.”

7. Love for the status quo

Most people resist change just because they have finally gotten their life sorted out and they are living a relatively comfortable and hassle free lifestyle. This mindset says, “I like things just the way they are. I know where everything is and how to do what I am presently doing.”

8. Self-centeredness

Some people only consider their personal role in the light of the proposed change; it is difficult for them to look out for the interests of others or the organization as a whole. People tend to “vote their pocketbook.” This mindset says, “What’s in it for me?”

9. Vested interests

Some people have been in the organization for a long time and the proposed change tampers with a program or system that has their name on it or changes

a position to which they have attained. In other words they may have been one of the originators of the old and it is difficult for them to not take the proposed changes or the shift in reporting lines personally. This mindset says, "I was there when this was created. Don't you realize how much I have personally invested in this program?"

#### 10. Love of ease and personal comfort

Some people will resist any corporate change because it will mean that they will have to personally change to accommodate it. They understand that the proposed change will mean a lot of work and they are not interested in the extra work or extra hours involved. This mindset says, "Leave me alone. Don't rock my boat!"

#### 11. Lack of respect or trust in those leading

Some people have low regard for those who are inspiring and leading change. Often this is the case because of a bad track record by those who are leading when it comes to change. Perhaps some of the changes in the past did not work out so well. This mindset says, "Let's just wait and see."

#### 12. Not being consulted or included in planning

Some people consider a change positive if they were consulted or had some positive input into the development process. This mindset says, "That is their idea, not my idea of how things ought to be done."

The leader who seeks to initiate change will understand that all of these mindsets may be present among some in the church or organization and will seek to develop a strategy for change that will take them into account.

The following are some tips on facing barriers and challenges in the change process as offered by Washington State School Directors' Association:

- Expect resistance.
- Explain the rationale for change.
- Choose your opening moves carefully.
- Provide a clear vision.
- Seek opportunities to involve people.
- Promise "problems".
- Over-communicate.
- Beware of bureaucracy.
- Wear your commitment on your sleeve.
- Alter the reward system to support improvement.
- Get resistance out in the open.
- Make sure people have the know-how.
- Track behavior and measure results.
- Outrun the resisters.

### **III. What are some guidelines to keep in mind during the change process?**

The pastor/people problems can be brought into a place of balance. Here are some guidelines (in addition to the above) that can guide us through change.

- A. Make sure all changes (especially early changes) are carefully thought out and clearly confirmed to be the will of God. People will judge all changes by your first change.
- B. Make sure you properly prepare the ground to plant the seeds of change (wineskin must be saturated in water). This involves making a biblical case for the changes.
- C. Make sure that you clearly write, spell out and communicate the vision before you implement it (Hab. 2:2).
- D. Begin the change process with those at the top levels of leadership and work down the chain of command.
- E. Be patient with people in the changing process (Gen 33:13).
  - 1. Do not overdrive the sheep; you must gently lead them.
  - 2. You must discern how much they can handle.
  - 3. Be prepared to offer key individuals personal attention as needed.
- F. Only focus on one major change at a time (one program at a time). Visualize the growth pattern of an oak tree that grows one ring at a time.
- G. Get a vision for the long term, not just the immediate.



## Lesson 24

### The Vision and Values of City Life Church

#### Mission Statement

*City Life Church exists for the purpose of **Reaching People** with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, **Raising Leaders** for all areas of the church and society and **Releasing Ministry** to extend the Kingdom of God in all spheres of influence.*

#### Vision Statement

The vision of City Life Church is to be an apostolic or resource church that reflects a strong commitment to prayer, the word of God, evangelism, discipleship, spirit-filled worship, authentic community, multicultural and multigenerational expression, team ministry and world outreach. It seeks to exemplify a spirit of generosity by lifting, equipping and providing resources to the poor, to believers, to church leaders and to local churches assisting them in entering into their divine destiny. This vision includes the establishing of a numerically strong pattern church, a ministry training center, online resources for all phases of church life and the establishment of like churches throughout the world.

#### A. Our vision includes becoming a pattern church for Africa.

Our vision is to establish a pattern church for Africa after the model of the Antioch Church that is described in the New Testament (Acts 9 and 11). These qualities include the following:

##### 1. A Pure Church

We desire to be a local church that holds personal character over ability, holiness over charisma and spiritual strength over natural strength.

*And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.'"*  
Leviticus 19:1-2

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light... I Peter 2:9*

##### 2. A Servant Church

We desire to be a local church that fully embraces the teaching of Jesus requiring all of His followers, especially leaders, to posture themselves as servants and to lay their lives down for others so that the people of God can become successful in reaching their God-ordained destiny.

*And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Matthew 10:44-45*

*And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Mark 9:35*

### **3. A Word-Based Church**

We desire to be a local church that accurately interprets the word of God, preaches and teaches the word of God without compromise and seeks at all times to align itself with the pattern of living reflected in the word of God.

*For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. I Thessalonians 1:8*

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. II Timothy 3:16-17*

### **4. An Evangelistic Church**

We desire to be a local church that takes the commission of Christ seriously in preaching the gospel and reaching out to those who have not entered into the Kingdom of God through the new birth experience.

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20*

### **5. An Authentic Community Church**

We desire to be a local church that is composed of people who have entered into a place of authentic community, deep fellowship and caring relationships that translates into a caring and compassionate body of believers (Acts 2:44-47).

### **6. A Family Church**

We desire to be a local church that recognizes and celebrates the sanctity of marriage, the value and importance of children and the indispensable contribution that the natural family has to the fulfillment of God’s purpose in the church and in society.

### **7. A Multi-Ethnic Church**

We desire to be a local church that has no “walls” separating people culturally, racially, economically, educationally or generationally believing that our expression of the Body of Christ on earth should reflect God’s heart for every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue (Rev. 5:9; 14:6).

*Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. Revelation 14:6, NIV*

## **8. A Worshipping Church**

We desire to be a local church that understands its priestly ministry to God in offering to Him the spiritual sacrifices of praise and worship according to the biblical prescription for worship reflected in Psalms.

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:23-24*

*Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. Hebrews 13:15*

## **9. A Praying Church**

We desire to be a local church that demonstrates its utter dependence on God, its passion to hear His voice and its recognition that God is the head of the local church by emphasizing an individual and corporate life that is saturated by prayer.

*My house shall be called a house of prayer... Matthew 21:13b*

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42*

## **10. A Prophetic Church**

We desire to be a church that operates in the gifts of the Spirit as described in the New Testament with a strong desire to see prophetic ministry bringing edification, exhortation and comfort to the people of God.

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. Acts 2:17-18*

*Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*  
I Corinthians 14:1

## **11. A Team Ministry Church**

We desire to be a local church that practices team leadership ministry as reflected in the Godhead, the natural family and the local church consisting of a plurality of elders with a chief elder or senior pastor.

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... Ephesians 4:11, NIV*

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17*

*So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23*

## **12. A Generous Church**

We desire to be a local church that has the generous spirit of Jesus who said that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:25) and "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:8).

*A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*  
Proverbs 11:25, NIV

*I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35*

## **13. A Church of Excellence**

We desire to be a local church that reflects God's nature to the world which includes the qualities of industry, efficiency, goodness and excellence in every area of expression taking our responsibility seriously to be the leaders and shapers of society.

*As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." Psalm 16:3*

*Sing to the LORD, for He has done excellent things; this is known in all the earth.*  
Isaiah 12:5

## **14. A Church of Financial Integrity**

We desire to be a local church that is a wise and faithful steward over all of the resource provided from the Lord knowing that we will one day give an account of our stewardship to the Head of the Church—Jesus Christ.

*You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed-- God is our witness. I Thessalonians 2:5*

## **15. A Global Church**

We desire to be a local church that is not only concerned about reaching its city with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but is also interested in reaching the nation, the continent and the world (Acts 1:8).

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

## **16. A Powerful Church**

We desire to be a local church that is truly baptized with the Holy Spirit and power, that walks in the power of the Kingdom of God and that experiences the miraculous display of God's awesome ability in our midst.

*And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark 16:15-18*

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Acts 4:32-33*

## **B. Our vision is to be a resource church to the world.**

1. This means becoming a significant church in our own region.
2. This means providing resources for all of the functions of local church life.
3. This means making teaching and training resources available to the world.
4. This means providing fellowship and resources to other pastors and local church leaders.
5. This means training leaders for the world.
6. This means planting churches in Africa and other parts of the world.