

Understanding Godly Vision & Purpose

- Why is Vision so important?
- The threat of meaninglessness (or lack of purpose)
- How can I be sure my Vision is godly?
- The link between spiritual authority and Vision



These and similar questions are answered in this topical booklet, specifically designed for those seeking to know more about God and looking for answers to some of the deeper questions of life and eternity.

WRITE THE VISION, MAKE IT PLAIN

The Bible clearly teaches the importance of having vision:

“Without a (progressive) vision (or revelatory understanding), people perish” (Prov 29:18)

Some translations say the people go about “*unrestrained*”, which makes for a graphic image. The inference is clear - unless a group of people are unified under a common banner, for a common purpose, have a clearly defined strategy and are goal (vision) oriented, they will not succeed!

The Local Church was intended to be a place of vision, with a mandate to encourage, inspire, teach and motivate fellow believers in their faith and in their everyday lives, to ultimately achieve whatever it is God has called them to be in this life. It is both an exciting prospect and a sacred trust.

Jesus came to meet needs, heal wounds and set captives free (Luke 4:18,19). Paul said:

“I press on toward the goal (the mark) for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14).

As believers we should have high expectations of Church.

Godly Vision and Purpose

“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” (Hab 2:2-3)

Vision by its very nature is alive and dynamic. When vision comes from God there is a divine attribute to it. Our vision should therefore be taken seriously. The thoughts and imaginings of the heart - some of which are divine in nature - should be listened to and discerned carefully. We should also document them where possible, maintaining the flexibility to adjust or change as the Lord leads, or as circumstances change sufficient to warrant redirection and revision.

It is important to remain flexible to what God may say as time progresses.

The Early Church

The early church was inspired, and very much goal oriented. They had vision, purpose, passion and enthusiasm, and were so determined to fulfil their God-given mission in life that they were quite prepared to lose their lives in the attempt!

They were highly motivated and focused on what Jesus told them to do, and were so successful that they turned the then-known world upside down in their lifetime, and the church of Jesus Christ prospered and multiplied as a result.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20)

This statement, given to the disciples by Jesus just before his ascension, has become known as “**The Great Commission**”.

To neglect having definite, positive objectives (goals) in any endeavour is contrary to sound Biblical teaching and a major source of under-achievement in the Christian world.

- ◆ **Pastor Yonggi Cho says**, “All Christians should have the **ultimate goal** to reach heaven and see Jesus face to face, and to hear him say, ‘Well done’.”
- ◆ **The Apostle Paul says**, “I press on **toward the goal** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14).
- ◆ **Peter Daniels**, a Christian businessman and international communicator says, “We should all have a **Lifetime Goal** to reach our full potential in this lifetime.”

The Threat Of Meaninglessness

“Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do. So banish grief and pain, but remember that youth, with a whole life before it, still faces the threat of meaninglessness. Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honour him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living. It will be too late then to remember him, when the light of the sun and moon and stars is dim to your old eyes, and there is no silver lining left among the clouds” (Eccl 11:9-12:2 TLB)

There is another valid and often overlooked reason why vision is important on a personal level, as well as for the sake of the health and success of the local church. It is because of the **risk, or threat, of meaninglessness!**

Man without God has a meaningless existence. Without an understanding of eternal rewards and eternal consequences we all run the risk of living a life of self-centred devotion. If we live in a manner as believers which displeases God then we lack purpose and meaning for our lives and cannot help but be shallow and irrelevant, at least from an eternal perspective.

People strive for purpose and meaning to life, but without God this is an impossible goal to attain to. At best we find substitutes. At worst we become totally deceived and miss the truth completely.

Jesus is not only the reason for the Christmas season – He is the reason for everything! New Life in Jesus Christ is what makes life worth living. Choosing to dedicate ourselves to seeking His purposes and obeying His word is a guaranteed recipe for success in life, contentment and peace in our souls, and an awesome, exciting and challenging future.

Local Church Vision

By definition the Local Church has a vision to reach and transform their region and their city, to become a church of influence, to reach lost people with the full gospel of Jesus Christ, to meet needs, heal wounds and set captives free.

Focus for growth is rightly centred on unchurched people, whether believers or not. In areas of ministry our concentration should be where we can have the greatest influence and impact on people's lives, seeking out those open to our message of hope and salvation, who may even one day choose to call the local Church their spiritual home.

As well as reaching lost souls, the Church exists to encourage, inspire, and motivate fellow believers in their faith and in their everyday lives.

Our primary mandate is to build a vibrant and successful local church, our desire being to reach out and influence selectively the region surrounding where we live, and where we worship.

When The Pattern is Right ...

When the pattern is right, the glory will fall!

“And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain” (Exod 25:40)

In the Old Testament, when God wanted to do something, He would inform the relevant prophet, leader or king, and set down a pattern for what He wanted done. God always has a plan, and the pattern can always be found in Scripture for whatever God is wanting to do.

As New Testament believers we need to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on what we choose to commit to as the underpinning vision and purpose for our lives. This is what vision is all about - hooking into whatever ministry, passion and purpose he has laid out for us to discover and pursue as our very own! God has a great vision for our lives, our churches, this country, for you and for your family. God has a plan for your life!

On a basic level, God's heart will always be focused on reaching the lost, healing the wounded, restoring the backslider and setting the captives free. This is biblical (Luke 4:18), and something every believer needs to understand. His heart's desire needs to be ours as well, so to some degree this needs to underpin our own vision and purpose as believers. We are always free to do our own thing if we choose, but God's plans for our lives, if we choose to adopt them, are packed full of blessing, as stated in Jeremiah 29:11:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer 29:11)

Of course, His methods are not always ours, and His ways are sometimes different to what we would expect, or even prefer, but apart from being passionately involved in the process of reaching people, populating heaven and frustrating the plans of the devil, He also has beneficial and exciting plans for each and every one of us. God is the one who gives us our God-given vision and purpose in life. Who we are and what we are meant to do with our lives is very much ordained.

What Vision Is

Vision is not falling in line with just anything that suits you for the moment. True vision costs something to bring to maturity, and there is a price to pay for whatever God is asking of you. No matter how clever or inspired, or genuinely God-given, you cannot just adopt any man's vision as your own.

Vision is not about casually falling into line with a few people who seem to be generally moving in the same direction as you want to go.

Neither is vision about doing nothing until the heavens open and the voice of the angel calls to you from the deep.

Vision is about building a relationship with spiritual authority, walking with integrity before God and man, and dealing with the issues of respect for God's Word and how your relationship within the church is to function in a practical way.

It therefore follows that you cannot follow that which you do not truly believe in, that which you do not trust, and that which you cannot agree with. These three issues, **belief**, **trust** and **agreement** must be dealt with first before you can be of any use to God, to the business of building the kingdom, and to the eternal cause of Christ.

Henry Ford once said, ***“I am looking for a lot of men with an infinite capacity for not knowing what can't be done” ... and so is God!***

Let's expand on this idea of vision a little more. Most people acknowledge that too much of the church in Australia today is apathetic, unfriendly, self-interested and materialistic, and as for revival – not even close. A few notable exceptions can be seen when a church rises above the crowd and does something extraordinary, and everyone takes notice, but they are generally the exceptions, not the rule.

Unlike a couple of decades ago there are now many churches around Australia, mostly in major towns or cities, which number over a thousand, so we are progressing slowly. There are precious few that number over a couple of hundred in any regional area. This remains our challenge. Studies of Australian mega-churches reveal certain common characteristics:

- ◆ They are represented by strong and decisive pastoral or apostolic leadership.
- ◆ They are empowered by a strong sense of agreement and focus for their vision, which may be very different from a similar church in a different town. It is not their particular vision that is extraordinary, but the ability of the church leaders to fire the imaginations and passions of their people with it.
- ◆ They are not all Pentecostal churches. Many of them are traditional, singing hymns and doing many of the things we think God doesn't like and they shouldn't do. But they are successful, nonetheless.

John Maxwell says:

“A leader's courage to fulfil their destiny (vision) comes from passion, not position”

Vision and Technology

These days our reach as a local church body can be greatly extended through the wonderful technology available to us via the Internet and Social Media. Today we can upload teaching material, audio and video messages, and much information that will be accessible to anyone who has an Internet connection, from anywhere in the world! Reaching people in this way has never been more relevant, or important.

Success in ministry can be greatly enhanced when the right communication skills and technology are applied. One-on-one personal communication can never truly be replaced, but the reach and penetration of the gospel requires we respect these new alternate ways we can effectively share our faith.

We live in exciting times! Lives are being touched and changed everywhere by the power of God, and Jesus is building His Church, which the Gates of Hell will never be able to prevail against (Matt 16:18)! We have the glorious message of eternal life and hope in Christ to our hands to deliver to those who are lost and seeking answers, and our mandate as believers is to share this message as effectively and efficiently as we can, by any and all means available to us.

Technology is a tool, and a good one, which is God given and inspired, despite the way the enemy subverts and corrupts its use at times. Coupled to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit's anointing we can reach the world today in a way never dreamed possible in past generations.

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY AND VISION

Understanding our relationship to spiritual authority, and getting behind the vision God has placed in our leaders, is crucial if we are to see the kingdom of God extended in our region, and if we are to experience anything like the kind of church growth and success we all desire, even long for, but rarely see. So let's look a little deeper at this area of spiritual authority and vision.

Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee's exceptional book, "Spiritual Authority", was first published in 1972 and I read it shortly after arriving in Australia in 1974. Watchman Nee understood spiritual authority. He understood it so deeply he was prepared to suffer for what he believed, and spent a quarter of a century in Chinese jails for his faith. His books and teachings are revered the world over as classics, and I find that believers who read Watchman Nee and accept his teaching in these important areas are better adjusted in their attitudes towards authority, service, duty and issues of integrity than many who do not live by or practice such excellent teaching.

“The controversy of the universe is centred on who will have authority, and our conflict with Satan is the direct result of our attributing authority to God. To maintain God's authority we must be subject to it with all our hearts. It is absolutely necessary for us to meet God's authority and possess a basic knowledge of what it is.

Before he knew authority, Paul (Saul) tried to wipe out the church; after he met the Lord on the Damascus Road he saw that it was hard for the feet (human power) to kick against the goads (God's authority). He immediately fell to the ground and acknowledged Jesus as Lord. After that, he was able to submit to the directions given him by Ananias in the city of Damascus, for Paul had met God's authority. At the moment he was saved, he knew God's authority as well as God's salvation.

How could Paul, being a clever and capable person, listen to the words of Ananias - an unknown little brother mentioned only once in the whole Bible - if he had not met the authority of God? Had he not encountered authority on the road to Damascus he could never have been subject to that obscure little brother in the city.

This shows that whoever has met the authority of God deals purely with authority and not with man. Let us not see the man only, but also the authority vested in him. We do not obey men, but God's authority in man. Otherwise how can we ever learn what authority is? We are on the wrong road if we meet man first before we obey authority. The opposite is the right way. Then we will not mind who man is.

God has purposed to manifest His authority on earth through the church (Eph 1:18-23). God's authority can be seen in the co-ordination of the various members of the body of Christ. God uses his utmost power to maintain His authority; therefore His authority is the hardest thing to come up against. We who are self-righteous and yet so blind need once in our life to encounter God's authority so that we may be broken into submission and so begin to learn obedience to the authority of God. Before man can submit himself to God's delegated authority, he must first meet God's inherent authority.

When we obey authority we do not obey man, but God's authority in man. God has purposed to manifest His authority on earth through the church. God's authority can be seen in the co-ordination of the various members of the body of Christ."

BE FAITHFUL TO THE VISION GOD GIVES YOU

The Bible actually teaches that first we must learn to serve another man's vision before God will give us our own. This concept is based upon the premise that if God can trust us to be faithful in a little, He will eventually entrust us with more:

"And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:12)

In general terms there are three categories of people in any church as far as vision is concerned:

1. Faithfully Serve Another's Vision

There are those who have been faithful in serving another leader's vision, and whom God has honoured with a vision of their own for their life and their ministry before God. If your vision for ministry is truly of God then, in time, God will open up for you windows of opportunity to allow you to see this vision fulfilled. The time will quickly come when He will release you to follow it to the best of your ability. In the meantime serve faithfully where you have been planted.

2. Divinely Integrated Vision

There are those who have been given a vision by God, whose vision is divinely integrated, and may even be dependent upon, the vision of the local church and the support of the leadership. Not only are these people called to serve, they should also be among the most productive and prolific workers in the church. Such people realise that success is dependent upon faithful obedience to those whom God has called them to serve under, and they need little further teaching or encouragement. Their patience and attitude in serving another while praying and working towards the fulfilment of their own vision will bear much fruit, and it will be fruit that remains.

3. Local Church Vision

For the majority, their vision should be that of the local church. If this is you, I challenge you to submit your views to a higher authority, and ask you to consider carefully whether God has entrusted you with a vision of your own, or whether it is your responsibility to serve another man's vision until that time comes.

"The empires of the future are the empires of the mind" Winston Churchill

"The only limits are, as always, those of vision" James Broughton

"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavours to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours"

Henry David Thoreau

Quoting Watchman Nee one more time:

"The greatest of God's demands on man is not for him to bear the cross, serve, make offerings or to deny himself. The greatest demand is for him to obey. Why did Samuel say, 'To obey is better than sacrifice' (1 Sam 15:22)? King Saul lost his kingdom over this incident. Why? Because even in sacrifice there can be an element of self-will. Obedience alone is absolutely honouring to God, for it alone takes God's will as its centre."

STAND UP AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Former US President Theodore Roosevelt was a man of vision. He said:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

"Citizenship in a Republic" speech, The Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910

Dare to Dream

I dare you today to be one to change your world. It was Francis Xavier (1506-1552), who said:

"Give up your small ambitions. Come and change the world"

I dare you to challenge the status quo of 'just-get-by', business-as-usual mediocrity, and I dare you to change your own future, to make your own destiny, under God! Jesus said we are the light of the world. Jesus did not call the church to point out darkness but to reveal light! He didn't call us to point out the devil's handiwork, which has always been in existence, but to point to the light! He said we're salt. Salt affects anything it touches. It flavours the atmosphere of anything you put it on. We are salt. Salt flavours things. Salt preserves things. If we have lost our vision, our taste for the purposes of God and the destiny He has set before us, we'd better find it again real quick:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt 5:13-14)

"Thrown out and trampled underfoot by men". That's what Jesus said! I don't know about you, but that's not the lifestyle or destiny I have in mind.

When you are prepared to dream a dream and follow it through, especially as a believer who understands that we are all people of destiny when Jesus touches us and changes us, you will have passion, zeal, enthusiasm and influence!

If you have a dream you can't be quiet, you can't sit still, you don't conform – and for all the right reasons! You're passionate, outspoken. Your aim is to change your world!

***“Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul;
the blueprints of your ultimate achievements” Napoleon Hill***

***“Dream no small dreams for they have no power to move
the hearts of men” Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe***

We are the Church! We're light. We're salt. This is the purpose of having a godly vision. To take this awesome message we have been given and deliver it to those who have ears to hear. We're here to change our world!

