Series: Vision

January 21, 2018

Message Three:

**God’s Vision for New Life**

Ephesians 1:17-19

Growth Track Step 3

Generosity

Prayer

**Intro:** We are taking about vision - God’s vision for our lives - God’s vision for our church -

Message 1 - How Do We See?

Fasting - we close our mouths to food - we open our hearts to the voice of God’s Spirit.

Message 2 - Two-Way Prayer

God doesn’t have a speaking problem - we have a hearing problem - we talked about what we need to do to better hear from God.

**What is God’s Vision for New Life?**

Here’s what I believe:

**> It is God’s will for my church to grow.**

Heathy things grow. God never intends for us to stay where we started.

Growth is essential as long as heaven and hell are realities…

We need to be sure to grow for the right reasons: We’re not growing for ego reasons.

We’re growing because God so loves the world …

**> Our growth potential is different.**

As individuals … and as a church …

Think in terms of percentages … we are reaching more of our community than churches than have 1000’s in large cities - but should we be satisfied with that? That’s the wrong measuring stick. How many are not reached … don’t know the message … don’t know the hope … That’s the only thing that matters whether we have 500 or 5000 here on Sunday morning …

We’ve got to stop comparing ourselves with others, because we all have different assignments.

2nd Corinthians 10:12 - …When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Leads to either pride or self-condemnation.

**God will not hold us accountable for what we have done; God holds us accountable for what He has asked us to do.**

**> I can get better.**

Some think everything is all up to God. Everything is not always up to God – it’s up to us. We have to cooperate! God doesn’t invade the free will that He gave us! We can improve as much as we cooperate with His desire to make us better!

Be careful about blaming something else or someone else for our lack of progress in what God wants us to do – That’s victimization. God hasn’t created us and forgiven us for us to always be playing the victim card. That is also not spiritual maturity. We have God’s Word - we have God’s Holy Spirit - He has given us Himself and the tools and the gifts we need in order to be productive for Him in the Kingdom of God.

If you don’t get better, you’ll be critical of those who are.

Story of Chik-fil-A meeting where all were arguing about how they could get bigger.

Truett Cathy, founder, mild-mannered man, slammed his hand on the table -

“If we get better, our customers will demand that we get bigger.” ~Truett Cathy

Proverbs 29:18 MSG - If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.

You can’t just aim at anything. You have to aim at the right thing.

**God’s Vision consists of 4 things:**

 **• Lost people saved.**

 **• Saved people pastored.**

 **• Pastored people trained.**

 **• Trained people mobilized.**

This is seen in several places -

Exodus 6:6-7 - Therefore, say to the Israelites: “I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

Next Month - Cup of Sanctification - Cup of Deliverance - Cup of Redemption - Cup of Praise

The prophecy of Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:1-4 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

* **Proclaim Good News**
* **Bind up the brokenhearted**
* **Bestow on them beauty instead of ashes**
* **They rebuild others**

The vision didn’t change in the New Testament:

Mark 16:15-20 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe... Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

* **Win**
* **Assimilate**
* **Disciple**
* **Send**

Paul and the early Church devoted themselves to these 4 things, as seen in Colossians:

Colossians 1:28-29 - He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

* **Proclaim Christ to them**
**Admonish them**
**Teach them**
**Help them reach their full potential**

Next is the passage that we use to communicate our vision; we call it “Our Prayer for You”

Ephesians 1:17-19 MSG - I ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for you.

Paul’s first prayer in Colossians was for people to -

**1. Know God.**

Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you.’”

People don’t want religion - people are tired of religion - people with no connection to church don’t care anything about denominations and their differences -

They really want to know God. Everything else in God’s plan requires a real relationship with God

This is the first and highest calling of the church. Why? Because people were made to Know God! No one will be totally fulfilled until they do!

So what do we do?
Now that the vision is clear – create a system to help people Know God.

Our system is: Weekend Services

The most likely time when people who don’t know God are going to join us is going to be Sunday morning. They may join us at other times as well - and you have contact and influence all through the week - but when we are together on Sunday morning, we are mindful of the fact that people are here who don’t really know the Lord, have no idea what it means to walk with Jesus.

That means that we don’t create the experience for Christians alone. The church doesn’t exist for those already here, but for those who are not here yet.

A key to making anything work - in business - in education - even in church - narrow the focus.

We don’t have to do everything we know how to do on Sunday. Committed believers gather at all kinds of different times and settings than just Sunday morning - we can do all that stuff we know how to do anytime we are together - but when people are with us who don’t know God - like even today - the Scripture tells us to give them a high priority in our thoughts, plans, preparations, and activity together.

After Knowing God Paul’s second prayer in Colossians is to have the “Eyes of heart enlightened – focused and clear.”

 **2. Find freedom.**

We take people on a journey to get their hearts right.

We see through the filter of our heart’s eyes, which can be Wounds – disappointments – failures– relationships -

How do we do this?

Life change happens in the context of relationships

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

Our system is: Small Groups

This is the place where masks can come off, and lives are changed.
Key to making our system work: All ministry in groups. We don’t do it any other way.

Third part of Paul’s prayer is “Hope of the calling.”

 **3. Discover purpose.**

It is critical to help people find their calling, because that’s where their hope is.

Two of the greatest days in your life: The day you were born and the day you discovered why.

You may be always trying to solve problems, but happiness is found in purpose.

Paul was hard pressed on every side, but not in despair. Why? Eyes fixed not on what is seen, but unseen. His purpose changed everything .

Secret to really ministering to people is not to solve their problems; but give them something in their life bigger than their problems. This is our desire for you - because it was God’s desire for His people - It was Paul’s desire for the Church!

We’re supposed to help you find and develop your grace gift, not to build the ministry around my gift.

The whole purpose of discipleship is to help people find their redemptive calling.

Romans 12:6 - We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Our system is: Growth Track

This is why we talk about it so much - offer it all the time - it’s not just an activity - this is one of our highest ministry priorities.

Four Sundays – four steps – designed to culminate in people knowing their gifts and connecting to make a difference.

Key to making our system work: Think steps not events.

What are your next steps? Events can be great - but little long term growth results from an event. We can have in great guest speakers or singers - but in the end, if we are not taking the next steps God has for us - we have just had an experience - not a life-changing encounter.

Paul’s final prayer in Colossians, “Grasp the glorious way of life God has for you.”

**4. Make a difference.**

1 Peter 4:10 - God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God’s generosity can flow through you.

God doesn’t just call a person; He calls a people.
Why do we have a unique purpose? You’re a part of God’s plan to touch the world.

How?
Our system: Dream Teams

Some call them volunteers – we don’t – they are the Dream Team.

Key to making our system work: Gift-oriented ministry.
Everyone in their place – fulfilled – successful – team

Ministry is simply the things we do to take people on this journey
And this is how we define success -

Success is when people are moving on the spiritual journey that God has for them.

 • We move people from lost to saved by creating a service where they can experience God.

 • We move people from saved to pastored by asking them to commit to relationships and join a small group.

 • We move people from pastored to discipled by helping them discover and develop their spiritual gifts.

 • We move people from discipled to mobilized by involving them in ministry with others.