

Devotional: The Importance Of Vision

“Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.” ~ Jonathan Swift

Michael Hyatt, *business consultant, writer, former CEO of Thomas Nelson publishers*, describing what he did before beginning work at a new publishing position:

The first thing I did was to go off on a private retreat. I had one objective in mind. I wanted to get *crystal clear* on my vision. What did I want to see happen? What would the division look like in three years? I didn't care about strategy; I was only concerned with vision.

Through the years, I had learned that if you think about strategy (the “how”) too early, it will actually inhibit your vision (the “what”) and block you from thinking as big as you need to think. What you need is a vision that is so big that it is compelling, not only to others, but to *you*. If it's not compelling, you won't have the motivation to stay the course and you won't be able to recruit others to help you.

For example, if I had been strategic before I was visionary, I might have said, “Well, I don't see how we can accomplish much. The situation is so dire. We don't have many resources to work with. Let's just try to get to break-even this next year. Maybe we can reduce our working capital some by selling off a little obsolete inventory. And, maybe we can sign a few new authors and get a little revenue growth.”

Do you think anyone would have gotten excited about this? Would this vision have attracted the right authors? Would it have retained the right employees? Would it have secured additional corporate resources? I don't think so.

The problem is that people get stuck on the how. They don't see *how* they could accomplish more, so they throttle back their vision, convinced that they must be “realistic.” And, what they expect becomes their new reality. This is simply *faith* applied negatively.



Write out some things we can learn about vision from the preceding essay.

Why does having vision matter?

A. George H. W. Bush scoffed about *"the vision thing"* which may have cost him the 1992 presidential election. Why is vision necessary for nations, companies, individuals and churches?

B. Proverbs 29:18 - "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint." KJV - *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* What's the danger of living visionless lives?

How do we receive vision?

"I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions." ~ Joel 2:28

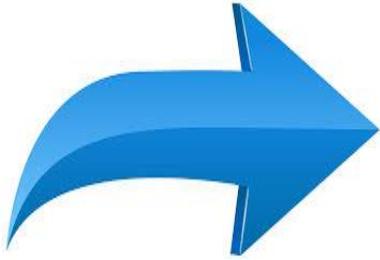
What is this Scripture saying? *How* do we receive vision?

"Seeing a vision might be the result of reading Scripture or of hearing an exciting story of life-transformation. It might result from coming face-to-face with a need that grips one's heart. It might even come as a leading directly from God. More likely, though, one sees the vision through witnessing or experiencing a work of God that's already done by someone else." – Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*

Have you ever experienced this – where your life suddenly moved in a better, healthier direction because of receiving a vision you didn't have before?

If your spiritual life or your church has become 'visionless' (i.e. stagnant, same-ole/same-ole), Hybels suggests that we ask ourselves the following diagnostic questions:

- Have you yielded yourself fully to God?
- Have you asked God to unveil his vision for your life, or are you asking him to bless a plan that you've already come up with?
- Have you prayed? Have you fasted? Have you been quiet and waited on God?
- Have you cleaned up sinful patterns in your life?
- Have you weeded out the distractions and ambient noise that would keep you from hearing what God is trying to say to you?
- Have you read avidly? Have you traveled widely? Have you visited a variety of ministries around your world so that you can be inspired by how others are experiencing God?



"Your plans and purposes must be God's plans and purposes or you will not experience God working through you. God reveals His purposes so you will know what He plans to do. Then you can join Him...Planning is a tool God may cause you to use, but it never can become a substitute for God. Your relationship with God is far more important to Him than any planning you will ever do."

Henry Blackaby & Claude King, Experiencing God

What vision motivated Jesus?

Last week we gave you more than 50 verses about Jesus' work and words. What can we learn about Jesus vision – and his mission – from these words. (Next week we'll discuss the difference between vision and mission.)

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him - but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit" (2 Cor.2:9)

Discussion On “The Unstuck Church” – Chapter 1

1. From chapter 1, discuss each of the “Key Steps” needed for a church to move forward from “Launch” to the next stage, “Momentum Growth”.

START WITH STRONG LEADERSHIP:

IDENTIFY WHO YOU ARE TRYING TO REACH (YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE) – AND IT BETTER BE YOUNGER

DETERMINE THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF YOUR MINISTRY. YOU NEED A MISSION THAT TURNS SOME PEOPLE AWAY FROM YOUR CHURCH.

ESTABLISH A FINANCIAL PLAN

GIVE MINISTRY AWAY TO VOLUNTEERS. GOD DID NOT DESIGN THE CHURCH FOR THE PASTOR TO MAKE EVERY HOSPITAL VISIT.

What specific, actionable lessons can we draw from chapter 1 that we can apply to FBC right now? What should we be working on *today*?

Your Assignment for Next Week:

- Read, or reread, through Chapter 2 – “Momentum Growth” in “The Unstuck Church”.
- Continue your research of churches around the country, and write out their Vision and Mission Statements. Aim to do at least 10 searches. Write out the name of the church, its location, and its statements. (Some may only have a mission statement.)
- Try to look at our church building and our Sunday service from the eyes of a first-time visitor. Write a paragraph outlining your thoughts and findings.