



The Princeton PathFinder

Kingdom Vision

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Expanding The Kingdom Of God In Our Lives And The World Around Us

Where there is no vision,
the people perish
Proverbs 29:18a



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SEEING THE FUTURE THROUGH THE VISION OF FAITH

One of the wonderful aspects of human life is that, along with the ability to remember the past and to analyze the present, we have the capacity to project ourselves into the future. Wherever people are marrying and raising a family, learning, and teaching fresh ideas, developing, and marketing new products, preparing for vacations or retirements, there is an affirmation of the future, a trust in the future, and an investment in the future. Try as we might, we are able neither to live simply in and for the moment, nor to rest comfortably in the accomplishments of the past. To be human is to dream of a future, to hope for it, to plan for it, and to dedicate our energies to the accomplishment of particular goals.

Christians are called to be a people who look to the future with hope. But what distinguishes Christians is not the mere fact that we hope. Rather, it is the basis, object, and scope of our hope. Over and over again the biblical narratives declare that the God of Israel and Jesus is a God of promise and of hope. *"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'"* (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV). The courage to trust the future comes not from confidence in our own abilities and resources, but from confidence in the faithfulness of God to fulfill God's promises.

The way in which we anticipate the future is shaped by our vision of what is really real. Does reality consist only of what we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands in the present? Is our future determined only by what we can achieve today, limited by facts, figures, and trends of our current situation? Consider the story of Sarah and Abraham. They believed that God's promise of descendants as numerous as the stars was trustworthy, even more trustworthy than the empirical evidence of their infertility.



They saw their future with eyes of faith.

Our Christian community is called to see the future with eyes of faith. And we can because we believe in a *"God of hope"* (Romans 15:13), a God who considers our future and declares *"See, I am making all things new"* (Revelation 21:5). Because of God's promises that are

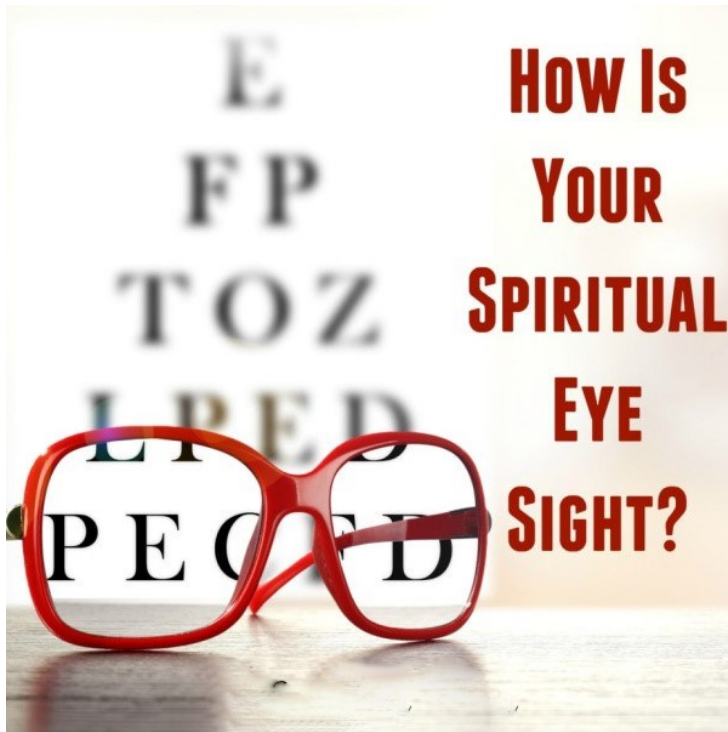
received by faith, we see the future differently. To have hope is to imagine a new state of affairs not yet existing. As a Christian community our vision for the future can be – must be – hope-filled and imaginative, not limited or determined by facts, figures, and trends of the current situation.

Seeing with the eyes of faith enables us to think the unthinkable and to imagine the unimaginable. Seeing with the eyes of faith enables us to experience what has not yet come to pass. The Old Testament prophets are well known for seeing the future with eyes of faith in this way – a time when the lion and lamb will lie down together, when swords will be pounded into ploughshares, when war will be no more, when the captives will be freed and the blind will see, when the hungry will be fed and the naked clothed. In other words, when all of creation will be transformed into a new heaven and a new earth. With the eyes of faith, we too are given the ability to imagine – to visualize God's dream for humanity, and God's dream for our church.

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SEEING THE FUTURE THROUGH THE VISION OF FAITH—continued

This Christian hope is not naïve or foolish. Indeed, it alone is truly real for it sees reality in light of the possibilities, the promises, and the power of the God who creates and sustains all that exists.



This way of seeing reality does not come naturally. Humanity is blinded to what is really real. Separated and alienated from God, preoccupied with our own desires and plans, we have become barren in our thinking. We live under the illusion that we have life apart from God. Trusting in our own wisdom, we put forth our own visions of the purpose of human life. More often these are visions of success, wealth, power, security, and happiness. And we often tie our hopes for the future to these visions.

So, as we consider visioning for our church's future, it is important to renew a faithful vision of what is really real in the first place. That is, seeing the world as it really is: the creation of a loving God who will not leave us to our own rebellious ways, but is faithful to God's promise of full and abundant life. This is the special vision that God has granted the Christian community, by enlightening the eyes of our hearts (Ephesians 1:17-18), and by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). This is at the very heart of what it means to be Christian.

Visioning in the church, then, involves processes of surfacing, testing, and transforming our vision – the way we see what is really real. This is not a periodic planning effort, but is, rather, central to the ministry and mission of the church. We all too often stress the importance of ideas and actions, while neglecting the power of vision to shape and determine that which we think and do.

This underscores the formative and substantive role of vision: "Vision permeates our thoughts, desires, interests, ideals, imagination, feelings and body language; it is our worldview, our sense of life, our basic orientation towards reality. Our vision gives rise to our character, to our style of life, to our tone of being in the world. Vision is the way we grasp the complexity of life; it involves the meaning and value that we attach to the complexity of life as a whole and to the things of life in particular."

~Robin Fortner

The \$100 \$50 \$20 Bill

A \$100 bill, a \$50 bill and a \$20 bill were having breakfast together one Monday morning. The conversation turned to what they had each done over the weekend. The \$100 bill stated he had a 3 course meal at Haub's Steakhouse and went to an IMAX movie where he enjoyed a large tub of buttered popcorn.



The \$50 bill stated he ate at Hooter's, just for the wings of course, and then played a few games of pool and had a few drinks at the local watering hole.

The \$20 bill stated....Offering Plate, Offering Plate, Offering Plate.

All joking aside, if your money could talk—what would it say about you? What are your priorities with money?

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” Matthew 6:21

~Jill Fougnyes



Give

Serve

Attend

Grow

Stewardship

OUR GOD-LED VISION

There are many types and kinds of visions, and various purposes for them. But in the Church of Jesus Christ the purpose of a vision must be God-Led, Outreach Centered, and Equipping Saints.

About 350 years ago a group of immigrants landed on the northeast coast of America. The first year they created and established a town. The next year they elected a town government. The third year the town government planned to build a road five miles westward into the wilderness.

In the fourth year some of the people tried to impeach their town government because they thought it was a waste to build a road five miles westward into a wilderness. Who needed to go there anyway? Who knew what was out there? Perhaps something dangerous or harmful to the people lurked out there in the wilderness. It is interesting to note that just four years prior, these same people had built a town and a government out of the wilderness.

Here were people who had the vision to see hundreds of miles across an ocean and overcome great hardships to get there. But in just a few years they were not able to see even five miles out of town. They had lost their pioneering vision.



As we apply that to the church, with a clear vision of what we can become in Christ, no obstacle is too great to overcome. No mountain. No valley. No wilderness. But if we remove Christ from the center of our vision we will rarely move beyond our current boundaries.

We are familiar with the vision and the mission we find in Matthew 28:18-20, which says: 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."

A frequent review to stop and think about what Jesus is asking of us is beneficial. It is important to know what is required. Just as if you prepare to construct a building or if you are baking a cake, you must know what ingredients or tools or parts you will need to accomplish the task at hand.

Moses, as he led the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land summoned all of them together and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am the LORD your God. And when you came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle, but we defeated them. We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do." Deuteronomy 29.2-9

Secondly, we must have Eyes to See the Vision – to be aware of the Destination

When Walt Disney World in Orlando ,FL. opened in 1974, Mrs. Disney was sitting beside Walter Cronkite. Walt Disney has passed away a few years earlier. Walter Cronkite wanted to say just the right thing to Mrs. Disney, so he leaned over to her and said, "Wouldn't it be great if Walt were here to see this today." Mrs. Disney wisely replied, "If Walt had not first seen this you would not be seeing it today."

It is dangerous to lack vision. We see in Proverbs 29.18: "Where there is no vision the people are unrestrained."

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OUR GOD-LED VISION—*Continued*

"Vision" can be insight from God and it serves as direction to us, but it can also be a teaching tool. Israel continually got into trouble whenever there was a lack of teaching or a lack of heeding the teaching.

Vision also requires hands and feet ready to carry out the vision. Hands and feet provide the route the church is to take.

When Julius Caesar landed on the shores of Britain with his Roman legions, he took a bold and decisive step to ensure the success of his military venture. He ordered his men to march to the edge of the Cliffs of Dover. To their amazement, they saw every ship in which they had crossed the channel engulfed in flames. Caesar had deliberately cut off any possibility of retreat. Now that his soldiers were unable to return to the continent, there was nothing left for them to do but to advance and conquer! And that is exactly what they did.

Our vision must be God-led, carried out by our hands and feet. We may not always see clearly but we must follow God's directions.

For six months they struggled with design after design. Nothing. Another six months. Nothing. At the end of the year Ford checked with his engineers, and once again they told him that what he wanted was impossible. Ford told them to keep going. They did. And they discovered how to build a V-8 engine!



When we finally see God's leading, it is vital that we stay the course. There will be those who will try to distract us from our vision. Someone will try to distract us from our work. See Nehemiah as he was building the wall. He was insulted, mocked, laughed at by Sanballat and others. But he stayed the course. He knew God was leading him in the work. He kept the vision in sight through all the opposition.

It is always true that if a mission fails it is because we lose sight of the vision and we forsake God who led us. Jeremiah put it this way, "Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when He led you in the way?" (Jeremiah 2:17)

Helen Keller was once asked the question: "Is there anything worse than being blind?" "Yes," she replied, having eyesight but no vision." Vision is the ability to see what others can't.

Vision is able to see beyond the norms of each day to the possibilities of tomorrow.

~Gary K Fair



Some material adapted from
A God-Led People by Perry Greene

How Do You Vision Your Role in the Kingdom?

You *have no idea of the impact you can have in this world.*

Every person has a God-given gift, mission, and a role to play in growing the Kingdom of Heaven. You (yes, you!) have been given a unique skill and talent from God! You possess passions deep down in your soul that were planted by the Creator for one purpose: That you would be equipped with all you need to join in His story! You have no idea the impact you may have on someone's life.

After reading that last paragraph, you may have instantly stiffened up or felt a little resistance. If you are like many Christians, you have some "push backs" to statements like these. Here are two of the most common push backs I hear:

Pushback #1:

I've heard that we all have a gift from God, but it doesn't really seem to be true in my life. I don't know of any special "God gifts" that I possess or a higher calling on my life.

Pushback #2:

Yes, I believe Christians have spiritual gifts. Actually, I know some of my gifts. But please stop telling me to change the world. That is only true for a few highly-gifted people. And, honestly, I don't think that is me. I *just* live my life: go to work, pay my bills, spend time with my family and go to church.

One Important Question

But all of these push backs come down to one pressing, deep, heart-level, question...

How can I make an impact for God's Kingdom?



Isn't that THE question? If you are interested at all in living for God, then you have wrestled with this question at some point in your life... *How can I possibly make a difference?*

It's a larger-than-life question. How can we have an impact? How can this be true in my life? Life seems so mundane at times and joining God in His story seems so epic. My life is anything but epic. Wow, I have felt that way so many times! We are in the same boat. But that's the wrong boat to be in!

Let's look at two key truths...

First: You HAVE been gifted by God!

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work." -1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV

God is at work in your life! The same God that created the universe, the same God that parted the Red Sea, the same God that allowed Peter to walk on water, the same God that conquered hell... This is the God that is at work in your life! And He has empowered you with His gifts to complete His service! It's time to own it!

Second: Your gift, talent, and skills are **UNIQUE** to you!

"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts forms one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many... If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body." -1 Corinthians 12:12-14;17-20 NIV

Each one of us has a different role to play! Are you an introvert? Great! You have a role to play. Are you a natural servant? Great! You have a role to play. Can you work on cars? Great! You have a role to play. Do you understand business? Great! You have a role to play. Are you an artist? Great! Yep, you have a role to play, too. The Kingdom of God is made up of all sorts of people. God's servants are not just preachers that can stand in front of an audience and preach a sermon. The Kingdom of God is made up of more than just extroverts! Each one of us has a role to play

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How Do You Vision Your Role in the Kingdom? - Continued

The Goal

Find WHERE and HOW God has called YOU to serve.

Find the unique place in life where God has called you to serve. Find where your passion and purpose and talent intersect. Then you will be in the sweet spot of God's will for your life. Then you live out your special calling.

But I am not a "world-changer", remember?

Let me introduce you to a man from the Old Testament named Bezalel...

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills...'"

-Exodus 31:1-3 NIV

Bezalel experienced this firsthand. He was filled with the Spirit of God way back in Exodus. God's wisdom; God's knowledge and all kinds of special "God skills!"

But why? What was so special about Bezalel? Why would he be gifted with the Spirit of God and special knowledge and skills?

"...to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also, I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent."

-Exodus 31:4-7 NIV

Bezalel was a construction worker! And get this... This is the FIRST time we have record in the Bible of God saying that He was going to empower someone with His Spirit!!

- Not a pastor.
- Not a priest.
- Not a prophet.

A construction worker.

He was uniquely gifted to play HIS role in the story!

Bezalel was creating the Tabernacle, a place of worship. As important as this was, we are called to build something greater. Each of us has a role to play in building the Kingdom of Heaven!

Honestly, it doesn't matter if you don't change the world. Very few of us actually will. It doesn't matter if you feel someone has more talents than you or something you think is more important or prestigious.

God has called you to live out His Gospel and spread His Word... *Where you are!* And guess what? Not only do you have the gifts to succeed, but you have been given the best. There is no "better" gift or "better" calling. You have *this* call and *these* gifts because God gave them to you.

When it comes to using YOUR gifts to fulfill YOUR calling, God has given you, His best!

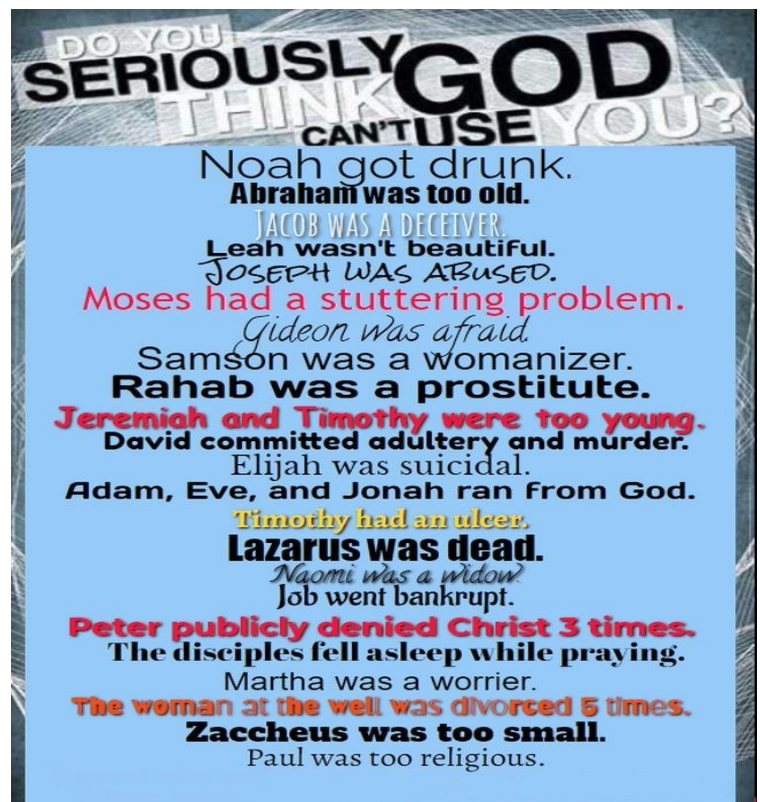
Let's stop living our lives like they don't matter to God or to this world. Let's stop downplaying our gifts and the role God has called us to play. Let's stop viewing ourselves as second-rate.

Instead, let's lean into the gifts that our ALL-MIGHTY, LIFE-GIVING, MIRACLE-CREATING GOD gave us. The same Power that parted the Red Sea lives within you. The same Power that allowed Peter to walk on water is deep inside of you. And the same God that conquered death gave you everything you need to play a part in His story!

That doesn't sound like a second-rate life.

That sounds like VICTORY!

~Aaron Jones





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CONGREGATIONAL GOALS

- If we are not united in the need for spiritual growth, it is unlikely we will set congregational goals that will nourish such growth.
- If we are not growing individually, any congregational goals will unlikely be met.
- If we desire to grow as a congregation, we need to be growing as individuals, and set our goals for such!
- Individual Growth Is Intertwined With Church Growth.
- A primary function of the church is the edification of the saints... Ephesians 4:11-16. We are challenged to minister our gifts to one another... 1 Peter 4:11.
- As we grow individually, so we grow as a church, and vice versa.



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