



Global College of Ministry

EXPLORE

The Christian & Vision

Dreaming Dreams, Seeing Visions

“And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

Helen Keller was a woman suffering from being both blind and deaf. She overcame these handicaps and raised money for the blind through the sale of her books and lectures. She was once asked, “What is worse than being blind?” She quickly responded, “Having sight but not being able to see.”

As Peter, on the Day of Pentecost repeated the Old Testament prophecy concerning the visitation of God’s Spirit upon all flesh, he reiterated that young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams. The Wise Man in the Book of Proverbs 29:18 wrote, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

George Barna of the Barna Research Group in his book, *Power of Vision* defines vision as:

“Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.”

He also related that Duke Ellington, the late jazz musician and band leader was once asked to provide a definition of rhythm. “If you got it,” he replied, “you don’t need any definition. And if you don’t have it, there isn’t a definition that will help.”

Visions and dreams for ministry are like a picture of the way things can or should be in the future.

A village chief lay dying and wanted to choose a successor. He called his three sons and told them, “Sons, I am about to go to the place of the departed spirits and I must first choose one of you to be the next chief of this village. I want you to go to the yonder mountain, climb it, and bring me something from the mountain. Hurry because I will soon die. Life is quickly passing from me.”

The three sons hurried off to the mountain and individually began to climb it. After a couple of days the first son came and stood before the aged chief. He said, “Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and I have brought you a tree limb.” The chief asked him to go and wait for the return of the other two sons. Several days passed when the second son returned to the father. “Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and have gone above where the trees are. I have brought you a rock from the mountain,” he stated, visibly tired from the journey.

It seemed like a long time and the third son had not returned. Finally, he came and appeared before his father. "Father," he began, "I have climbed high on the mountain. I have gone above where the trees are, and have climbed to the top. From the top of the mountain I could see far into the distance. I could see the river flowing, and smoke rising from distant huts. I saw the beauty of God's creation. However, my dying father, I have nothing in my hand to bring you." The old chief whispered, "You, my third son will lead my people because even though you have nothing in your hand to bring me, you do have something in your heart."

What do you see?

Jesus questioned His disciples one day by saying, "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?" (Mark 8:18).

Immediately following His statement, Jesus came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man to Him. Jesus led this man, by the hand, out of the town, spit on his eyes, put His hands on him, and asked him if he could now see. The blind man looked up and said, "I see men as trees, walking." Jesus wanted the man to have correct vision so He put His hands on his eyes once more and told him to look up again. This time "he was restored, and saw every man clearly" (Mark 8:23-25). It is interesting to note that He immediately asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" He was asking, "How do others see me?" then "What about you? How do you see me?"

Our prayer should become, "Lord give me eyes to see what you see. Give me ears to hear what the Spirit would have me to hear."

What we see is a matter of perspective. In I Samuel 3:1 we are told the "Word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." Everyone was doing what they felt was right in their own sight. Eli, the man of God had failed to pass on the faith to his sons. The Bible records a tragic statement concerning them, "They knew not the Lord" (I Samuel 2:12). Into the hands of this spiritually impotent leader was placed the young boy, Samuel. Samuel did not yet know the Lord (3:7) and Eli was a man whose "eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see" (3:2). It took God calling Samuel three times before Eli realized it was a possibility God was revealing Himself to the boy. How tragic that Eli could not see.

In contrast, Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he went up into the mountain and God showed him the Promised Land. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Perhaps the difference was revealed in Deuteronomy 34:10, "whom the Lord knew face to face." Moses had a relationship with God, knew God face to face, and could see what God saw.

In the Old Testament we recall the story of the twelve spies sent to view the Promised Land. What these twelve spies were able to see was a matter of perspective (how they looked at it). They were told to look at the land (Numbers 13:18). They went and came back to Moses.

Perhaps Moses asked them upon their return “Men, what did you see?” Ten of them said, “There we saw giants...and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (13:33). However, two of them boldly stated, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (13:30). The other ten argued, “We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we...It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature” (13:31-32).

The majority prevailed and wanted to stone the minority. The difference in the report of the two groups can be found in their perspective. The majority saw their abilities, and the giants. The minority saw above the giants to see God was bigger. Ten said, “We cannot” and two said, “We can.” It was the same with David and Goliath. The Israelites saw how small they were but David saw how big His God was. He proclaimed, “Is there not a cause?” (1 Samuel 17:29).

Elijah reached the place where he cried out to God, “I am all alone.” That was what he saw. However, God said, “I’ve still got 7000 that have not bowed their knee to Baal” (1 Kings 19:14,18).

If we can focus on Jesus Christ, and understand the attributes of God, we will believe God for great things and see things as He would have us to.

In 2 Kings 6:14-19 Elisha was in trouble for telling the King the secret battle plans of the King of Syria. He sent his men to capture Elisha.

Early in the morning Elisha’s servant rose up and saw the city was compassed about with horses and chariots. Elisha comforted the servant by explaining those, “that be with us are more than they that be with them.” Elisha knew the problem was with the way the servant saw things and prayed that the Lord would open his eyes. “And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” He then asked the Lord to smite the opponents with blindness. Zechariah was asked in Zechariah 4:2 “What seest thou?”

It is the will of God to open our eyes (Luke 4:18) and it is the devil’s will to blind us (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Walt Kallestad in his book, *Wake Up Your Dreams*, wrote, “Dreams can help us see the invisible, believe the incredible, and achieve the impossible.” Jesus was a builder of dreams and visions.

Walt Kallestad also expressed how Jesus allowed people to fulfill their dreams in his following statements,

- Blind people who dreamed to see saw.
- Deaf people who dreamed to hear heard.
- Crippled people who dreamed to walk walked.
- Hungry people who dreamed to eat ate.
- Lonely people who dreamed of friends found friends.
- Anxious people who dreamed of peace found peace.
- Addicted people who dreamed of transformation were transformed.

Study Questions

1. What was Helen Keller’s response to the question, “What is worse than being blind?” _____

2. What is “vision”? _____

3. Give two (2) examples of Old Testament stories that illustrate what we see is a matter of perspective. _____

4. What is a Bible verse that talks about “vision”? _____

5. What can dreams help us see? _____

6. Give a Scripture that shows it is the will of the devil to keep us blinded. _____

7. What will happen when we focus our eyes on Jesus and His attributes. _____

The Heavenly Vision

*"...I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."
Acts 26:19*

God's Vision for Paul

God's vision for Paul was revealed to a disciple named Ananias in Acts 9:15, "...for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles..."

Paul explained to King Agrippa what Jesus had said to him on the road to Damascus: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose...and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..." (Acts 26:16-18)

When Paul was converted he knew exactly what his purpose and vision in life was. God has a plan for each one of us. Paul knew what God wanted him to do, and he did it with excellence. Because of this he was able to reach the end of his ministry and say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7)

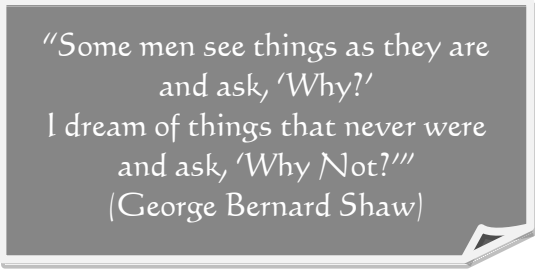
The Apostle Paul received his heavenly vision by asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Throughout his lifetime (as we should also do) he continued to ask this same question.

The heavenly vision always comes from God. Can you state in one sentence what are God's purpose, plan, and vision for your life? In the small box given, write your God given vision for ministry. Keep this in mind, and remember it on a regular basis and explain it to others.

My Heavenly Vision is...

God spoke to Habakkuk and said, "...Write the vision, and make it plain..." (Habakkuk 2:2) Writing down the vision will help you to remember what God originally said to you. Thank God for His direction, and allow the vision to develop through prayer, fasting, and obedience. Most people go through life as a passenger in the vehicle called life. We need to get into the driver's seat with our map of God's vision and drive into the future. Remember, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there."

The Heavenly Vision Will Be Tested



*"Some men see things as they are
and ask, 'Why?'
I dream of things that never were
and ask, 'Why Not?'"
(George Bernard Shaw)*

Whenever you receive a vision from God people will try to persuade you that it is not from God. Satan will also try to convince you that God has not spoken to you.

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus..." Acts 20:24

Visionary Leaders

Joseph was given a vision for his life through two dreams. These dreams revealed that he was going to be in a place of leadership over many people including his own family. His family members rejected this and his brothers became so jealous that they plotted to kill him, and eventually sold him into slavery. Through Joseph's experiences in the pit, in slavery, in prison, and in problems, we see that when God says 'Yes,' no one can say 'No!'. We learn that although our vision may be tested it will still be brought to pass.

Moses received a vision from God at the burning bush. However, getting Pharaoh to release the Israelites, and then taking the people of God through the wilderness was not an easy job. Pastoring this complaining, rebellious, stubborn group truly tested his vision. God promised that they would go into a land that flowed with milk and honey. This was His vision for His people. However, for them to possess the land they still had to fight the inhabitants. Did you ever think of "milk" and "honey?" They may have received the milk and honey but they still had to wrestle with the cows and the bees in order to get it.

Nehemiah was a godly leader with a vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He received this vision from God during a time of prayer and fasting. He was a man that was able to do the most possible dream because of his dependency on God. The Book of Nehemiah reveals an accomplished vision through prayer, fasting, sacrifice, hard work, and overcoming difficulties. Opposition reached such a level that those rebuilding the wall worked with one hand and held their weapons with the other hand. Every one of them had their sword by their side. They refused to disobey the heavenly vision and the walls of Jerusalem stood as their testimony.

Look at what happened between Paul receiving the heavenly vision and his finishing his course explained in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28: "I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death's door time after time. I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a night and a

day. In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather. And that's not the half of it, when you throw in the daily pressures and anxieties of all of the churches...I crawled through a window in the wall, was let down in a basket, and had to run for my life." (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*, Page 384)

In spite of all this he was determined to obey the heavenly vision with singleness of purpose. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)

Vision – Looking At the Future

Our vision for ministry is the best predictor of our future. Vision is looking at the future. It is always looking ahead instead of merely looking at our past. No matter what has happened in your past, your future is spotless. It is fresh from all sins, failures, and mistakes. Each day God gives us a new chalkboard with nothing written on it. It is totally clean. What are you going to do with the future that God is going to give to you? George Barna stated, "Vision is not dreaming the impossible dream, but dreaming the most possible dream." You are not asked to dream the impossible but dream the most possible thing you can do with your life and ministry. As we look at our God given vision we focus on God.

We expect Him to do great things through us, and for us. Vision is an explanation of what God wants to accomplish through us.

"For I know the thoughts (*plans*) that I think (*plan*) toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

God wants us to reach our expected end. Like Paul we can say, "I have finished my course."

Study Questions

1. Why did Jesus appear to Saul? _____

2. What was Paul able to say when he reached the end? _____

3. What did God tell Habakkuk concerning vision? _____

4. What did George Bernard Shaw say about dreams? _____

5. Who will try to persuade you that your vision is not from God? _____

6. Give an example of a Bible leader who had his vision tested. _____

7. Where is vision always looking? _____

8. What is the best predictor (indicator) of our future? _____

9. What did George Barna say about "vision"? _____

10. What question did Paul's heavenly vision begin with? _____

Additional Notes

Vision: What is in the Blank?

“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God . . .”
(Acts 13:36).

Cultures around the world have many differences. Languages vary. Ways of life and manner of dress change. However, every living person shares three similar elements. Each one has a past, present, and Lord willing, a future.

- 📖 PAST: Where have you been?
- 📖 PRESENT: Where are you now?
- 📖 FUTURE: Where are you going?

Charles Kettering has said, “My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there.”

(Rev. T. D. Jakes’ book, Maximizing the Moment was helpful and used in the preparation of this lesson.)

He mentioned that John F. Kennedy was born in 1917. He made his mark in life as the 35th president of the United States of America. President Kennedy is well remembered for many things, one being this statement:

“Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what can you do for your country.”

On November 22, 1963 an assassin killed Kennedy. His simple tombstone reads:

1917 – 1963

A lesson can be learned from this. Each person has a date of entry (birth date) into this world (birth date) and a date of departure from this world (death date). All that is between the two is the -----.

What are you putting in the blank
between the time of your entry
into this world and your
departure?

What we place in the blank determines the impact that we have between the two dates.

David was hoping to make an impact in life when he penned these words:

“Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come” (Psalms 71:18).

We were born for a reason. God has a plan, purpose, or vision for each one.

Donna Fisher in *People Power* says, “The life we desire deep in our being is the one we’re created to have, consistent with the way God made us.”

She quoted Basil Pennington who said, “It is your life’s work to learn to think and act in accord with who you are by creation.”

When Saul was knocked down on the road to Damascus, Jesus told him, “For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose” (Acts 26:16). Paul had an understanding of his purpose in life and ministry. Later, he concluded, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

How did Paul get this vision? He asked. After asking, “Who art thou, Lord?” (Acts 9:5) he then asked, “What wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

The Lord gives us a vision and then helps us to reach a successful conclusion.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

**Discussion Points:
(It Is Time to Think)**

What is the name of an important historical personality in your country? _____

When was he born? _____

When did he die? _____

What are some things that this person accomplished in life? _____

What other Scriptures can you find that talk about how brief life is? _____

In the Scriptures you found, how is “life” described? _____

Psalms 90:10 mentions that “our years are threescore years and ten.” With this figure in mind, approximately how many years are remaining in your lifetime? _____

“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am” (Psalm 39:4).

Study Questions

1. Quote the statement made by John F. Kennedy used in this lesson. _____

2. What three elements do we all have in common? _____

3. What three questions about your “life” will assist you in understanding God’s purpose and vision for you? _____

4. On a tombstone we notice “1960-1999.” What can we learn from this? _____

5. How was Paul (Saul) able to know the vision or purpose that the Lord had for his life? _____

Additional Notes

Where Are You Going?



“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

“I have appeared unto thee for this purpose” (Acts 26:16).




You might remember Mr. Huxley from a previous lesson. He was the man who had just finished a series of attacks against Christians. He was in a hurry to catch a train, and as he left the hotel, he assumed that the doorman had told the taxi driver his destination. Huxley jumped in the taxi and demanded, “Hurry, I’m almost late, drive fast!” As the taxi rushed through the streets of the city, Huxley finally realized that the driver was not going in the right direction. He shouted, “Do you know where you are going?” Without looking back, the taxi driver responded, “No, but I am going very fast.”

Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, admonished the people to save themselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:40). It was a generation going somewhere. They did not know where, but they were going very fast. We can get caught in the same situation. It has been said, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.” It could also be added, “And you’ll never know when you get there.”

A small child was riding his bicycle round and round in circles. An older man asked, “Where are you going?” The boy responded, “Nowhere,” and continued to ride in circles. The man continued to ask, “Where are you going?” Each time the little boy responded, “Nowhere!” This is the sad predicament of many, going nowhere.

-  Do you have any idea where you are going in life?
-  Do you understand your purpose in the journey of life?

In order to understand where you are going, you must first look at where you have been (past) and where you are (present.) After Adam and Eve transgressed in the Garden of Eden, God asked, “Adam, where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). The same question could be asked of you, “Where are you?”

-  What is your ministry?
-  What is your vision?
-  What is the will of God for your life?

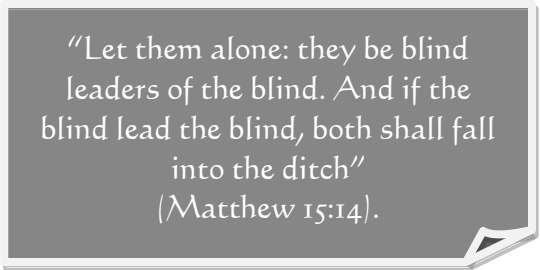
We are most effective when we are in the center of God’s will.

Imagine what it would be like to be blind. What are some of the different emotions that you would feel?

Now imagine what it would be like if you were blind, and another blind person was leading you down the street. What emotions would you feel? (Instructors should have the students try it, using blindfolds and see what happens)

Would you like to get on a bus or in a taxi with a blind driver? What about if the driver was always becoming distracted and turning around to talk to others instead of focusing on the road ahead?

No one wants to follow a leader who is blind (without a vision)—not a spouse; not a family; not students in the classroom; not workers in the workplace; not saints in the church; not members of any organization—NO ONE! Followers will always be afraid of the proverbial “falling in the ditch.”



“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”
(Matthew 15:14).

Vision is a clear picture in our minds of what life will be like down the road. It gives us an understanding of where we are going. Vision sets direction and serves as our roadmap. Once we understand where we are going, we must know how to get there from where we are. We fix our eyes on our destination and start working on a PLAN to get there. Our destination needs to be kept clearly in sight.

Some spiritual people have a problem with planning. They think that “walking by faith,” means that you have no plan. It has been aptly said, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Planning and faith go hand in hand. Effective, biblical faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith involves having something that you hope for (a goal, plan, or vision). Look at the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11. Notice that many of them had a vision. God used men of vision to bring the church into existence (Acts 2).

Nehemiah was a visionary leader who prayed and planned. He did not ask God for a miracle—he asked for an opportunity. Lots of opportunities come our way. We need to take advantage of the ones that will enable us to fulfill the vision God has given us. Each opportunity and open door should be assessed by asking, “How will this help me fulfill my life’s calling and vision?”

Not all good ideas are God’s ideas, so we must be careful. Everything that moves us forward toward accomplishing our vision gets a green light. Everything else gets a caution light or even a red light. We need to continually align ourselves and focus on our vision for ministry. This way we will conform our lives to the roadmap and plan that God has prepared for us.

How Will We Get There?

Once we understand where we are going, it is only natural to ask, “How will we get there?” We must be careful here because we can “how” our vision to death. In fact, others will try to “how” your vision to death by asking many questions. Where did the vision come from? If it is from God (and it should be), then “how” is God’s problem. What God has ordained, He will bring to pass.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

For each man of faith in the Bible, God provided not only the “what,” but also the “how.” Moses was asked to deliver God’s children from Egypt. He was told what to do and how to do it. Noah was told to build an ark. He was told what to do and how to do it. In the construction of both the Tabernacle and the Temple, men were told what to do and how to do it. The disciples were called to take the gospel to the whole world. They were told what to do and how to do it. (Ask the students to think of other Bible men of vision who were told what to do and how to accomplish it.)

As we look at the history of visionary leaders throughout the Word of God and throughout time, we conclude:

- ✓ “What” comes before “how.”
- ✓ You will often know “what” to do before you know “how” to do it.

It is important to wait on the Lord, in prayer, until you know the steps (the how’s) needed to accomplish the vision.

In Luke 1 a virgin named Mary was given a vision for her life. WHAT was it? She would bring forth the Messiah and call his name Jesus. Quite naturally, the first thing that came into Mary’s mind was, “HOW shall this be?” The angel gave her a brief explanation and wrapped it up with, “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Perhaps, in your mind you have already made a list of “why” the vision cannot be done through you. When you complete this list of vision killers, you need to give it a befitting burial.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

(T.D. Jakes’ book, *Maximizing the Moment* was helpful and used in preparing this lesson.)

Study Questions

1. In Acts 2:40 what did Peter mean when he spoke of an “untoward generation”? _____

2. What should take place before you can determine where you are going? _____

3. What question did God ask Adam in Genesis 3:9? _____

4. What happens when one follows a blind leader (Matthew 15:14)? _____

5. What is "vision"? _____

6. Show how effective faith includes planning or having a vision. _____

7. Nehemiah did not ask God for a miracle, but for what? _____

8. As we look at the history of visionary leaders throughout the Word of God, what can we conclude? _____

9. What did the angel say to Mary in Luke 1:37? _____

Additional Notes

Side Effects of Biblical Vision and Purpose

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

There are several aspects of Saul’s Damascus Road encounter we all could excitedly go for:

- Saw a brilliant light from heaven.
- Heard an audible voice.
- Spoke directly to Jesus.
- Received revelation.
- Healed of blindness.

Jesus had a grand purpose for Saul’s life. He was “chosen.” He was God’s “vessel;” an empty cup ready to accomplish the Master’s purpose. God was going to show him “great things.” Sounds like an ideal situation. But show him what? “I will show him how much he must suffer for me” (Acts 9:16, *NLT*). Now, wait a minute! Did you mention “suffering”? Surely, this is an isolated case, meant for Paul, and not for other ministers of the gospel (like me). Certainly, we can go for the vision, and bypass discomfort.

Have you ever taken a strong medication and experienced side effects? They are the undesired, unwanted, consequences of taking medication. These include (among others) a headache, rash, increased heart rate, blurred vision, dry mouth, sleepiness, weight loss, a drop in blood pressure, constipation, and diarrhea. Two people can take the same medicine and have different experiences. However, side effects are usually worth the risk, because health is restored. There are also side effects to having a biblical vision and purpose. Success costs! Not all ministers experience the same side effects but all testify, “Ministry is not an easy road.”

Ministry side effects might include:

- Suffering
- Sacrifice
- Surrender
- Submission
- Stewardship
- Service
- Sensitivity
- Steadfastness

Suffering

At times, we suffer persecution because of our faith; for righteousness' sake. Even fellow "Christians" may persecute us when we take a stand on a biblical issue.

Suffering or trouble can be for our benefit because they strengthen us as Christians. "It takes a world with trouble in it to train men and women for their high calling as children of God. Faced with trouble, some people (like Joseph) grow wings; others buy crutches. Which kind are you?" (*Daily Walk Bible*)

Here's a promise in God's Word you may not normally pray for:

- "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

All who live godly will suffer persecution.

- "For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this fight together. You have seen me suffer for him in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of this great struggle" (Philippians 1:29-30, *NLT*).

Check it out. All God's prophets suffered for their faithfulness to Him. Stephen asked, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" (Acts 7:52).

God's call, will and vision may require suffering.

- "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).
- "This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21-22, *NLT*).

You probably have heard enough about suffering, but let us add the following Scriptures:

- "I send greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in the service of Christ Jesus; they risked their lives for me. I am grateful to them — not only I, but all the Gentile churches as well. Greetings also to the church that meets in their house" (Romans 16:3-5, *TEV*).
- "[But what of that?] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us and for us and conferred on us!" (Romans 8:18, *AMP*).

- “Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. And as Christ's soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army” (2 Timothy 2:3-4, *NLT*).
- “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life-not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Timothy 1:8-9, *NIV*).
- “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:17-18).
- “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).
- “And 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 ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

We do not pray to suffer, nor do we rejoice for suffering, but we can rejoice in being able to suffer for His name's sake.

- “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me” (John 15:20-21).

Paul knew well suffering so he could realize his vision and purpose. Because of his willingness to suffer the gospel spread throughout the known world. Consider this short list of things he encountered:

- “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. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. 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. 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. 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. Then,

besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along” (2 Corinthians 11:23-29, *NLT*).

Which, if any, of Paul’s sufferings can you identify with?

In a prosperity pleading and success conscious world, suffering for His name’s sake is far from popular.

So, what should you do with this discussion about suffering? Warren and David Wiersbe in *Ten Power Principles for Christian Service* advise the following:

- Expect it (1 Peter 4:12; John 15:18, 20).
- Accept it as God’s gift (Philippians 1:29).
- Evaluate it and yield to God’s purposes (Job 23:10).
- Learn to live a day at a time and give your cares to God (Psalms 69:19; 1 Peter 5:7).
- Trust God to turn suffering into eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Surrender

- “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:23-24).

We choose to surrender what we perceive as our rights, and place ourselves in the hands of a higher power. We give up, so God can take up, and use us for His glory.

An old Nigerian chorus proclaims, “Jesus surrendered His life for me. What have I done for Him?”

At times, even though we may not express it verbally, we feel that we are “owed” something for ministering the gospel. The church owes us for our sacrifice. The people owe us for our work. We sometimes approach giving of our finances the same way. We give to get, instead of give to bless, or extend God’s kingdom. This is faulty thinking. We own nothing. But, we surrender everything to accomplish His vision. We must surrender ourselves to the vision that God has given us, to His will, and ways.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is not merely for divine favor, but to honor God. We owe everything to God, who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus’ sacrifice accomplished His vision and purpose on the earth. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10); give abundant life (John 10:10); destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8); and to build His Church (Matthew 16:18). Sacrifice pays off!

- “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalms 51:17, RSV).
- “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Daily one must pull himself onto the altar of sacrifice.

- “[Come] and, like living stones, be yourselves built [into] a spiritual house, for a holy (dedicated, consecrated) priesthood, to offer up [those] spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5, AMP).

Consider the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:20-37). Jim George (*God’s Man of Influence*) suggests five areas of sacrificial service.

- Sacrifice of time (he stopped and helped the wounded man).
- Sacrifice of resources (he gave his bandage and dressing for the wounds.)
- Sacrifice of personal transportation (he carried the man to the inn).
- Sacrifice of life (he personally took care of the man).
- Sacrifice of money (he gave money and promised to pay for the wounded man’s continued care).

“Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. If the minister’s life is without a measure of pain and sacrifice, his ministry will be without blessing.”
(Warren & David Wiersbe)

He closes his study on sacrifice by saying, “The greater the level of your service to others, the greater the level of your influence on others.”

Study Questions

1. Comment on the following statement: “Ministry is not an easy road.” _____

2. List five side effects or results of ministry.
 1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____
 4) _____

- 5) _____
3. According to the *Daily Walk Bible* what are the two responses to troubles that people take? _____

4. What does 1 Peter 2:21-22 say about suffering? _____

5. What did Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3-4? _____

6. Why did the Apostles rejoice in Acts 5:41-42? _____

7. List five types of suffering that Paul endured.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____
8. What response(s) should we give to the discussion of suffering? _____

9. What did Jim George say about the level of service to others? _____

10. How often should one pull himself on to the altar of sacrifice? _____

11. List the five areas of sacrifice provided by the Good Samaritan. _____

12. Write out the closing quote used in this lesson. _____

Side Effects of Biblical Vision and Purpose (Part Two)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”
(1 Corinthians 15:58).

In order to achieve a biblical vision and purpose you must be willing to submit to God’s will, in God’s way, and to obey His instructions. Submission and obedience are inseparable.

Submission

Mark portrays Jesus as the “Selfless Servant” who was immediately submissive to the will of God. The word “immediately” is recorded at least seventeen times in sixteen chapters of the Book of Mark.

Think of submission as bringing yourself under the protection of someone in authority. We must submit to our leaders if we expect our followers to submit to us.

At a wedding celebration, Mary told the servants, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5). We offer the same advice to you, preacher. Whatever, Jesus tells you to do; do it!

God’s Word often refers to submission in connection with:

- God
- Leadership and authority
- Society
- Other believers

“...They have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it” (1 Corinthians 16:15-16, *NIV*).

At times, we need to submit to others and help them accomplish their vision. Many times this also helps us accomplish our vision.

Service

Jesus set the example for all of us and came in the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7) He testified, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27, *NIV*). During the final night He had with His disciples He picked up a towel and basin and washed their feet. Why? He explained, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). Jesus is the real leader

of the church and its ministries. We are His servants and please Him when we help others in reaching their potential. We are called to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12, *NIV*).

Jesus taught James and John, the Sons of Thunder, a vital lesson. They came to Him with a request, “We want you to do for us whatever we ask.” This statement demonstrates not only ignorance but a selfish attitude. Leadership is not about being served (receiving) but serving others (giving). They went on to say, “Let one of us sit on your right and the other on your left in glory.” The world today would likely applaud James and John but Jesus corrected them. They mistakenly thought that the Lord’s kingdom was the same as all the others. Jesus explained His kingdom was not like those of this world that exercise authority over others, but that the greatest is the servant of all. (See Mark 10:35-37; 41-45).

We are servants to our:

- God
- Family
- People
- Vision

The Apostle Paul refers to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Additionally, he writes: “I became a servant of this gospel” (Ephesians 3:7, *NIV*). We have the privilege of proclaiming a life-transforming message.

“By God’s special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. 9 I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning” (Ephesians 3:6-9, *NLT*).

Jim George in *God’s Man of Influence* offers nine insights on establishing a servant ministry. They include:

1. Serve for a higher purpose (1 Thessalonians 2:1).
2. Serve in spite of your situation (1 Thessalonians 2:2).
3. Serve with integrity (1 Thessalonians 2:3).
4. Serve to please God (1 Thessalonians 2:4).
5. Serve with pure motives (1 Thessalonians 2: 5-6).
6. Serve with love (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).
7. Serve sacrificially (1 Thessalonians 2:9).
8. Serve blamelessly (1 Thessalonians 2:10).
9. Serve to nurture (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Understanding that we are servants is simple. To actually serve; that is a problem. It does not fit into the world's view of leadership nor does it please the desires of the flesh. We must constantly strive to be the servant that God wants us to be.

Stewardship

David J. Hesselgrove in *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* states that stewardship involves what a Christian possesses:

- His time
- His talents
- His treasures

Add to these:

- His tongue
- His testimony
- His temple

He notes seven basic principles (attributed to Ralph Martin, the author of *Worship in the Early Church*.)

1. The basis of stewardship is God has given abundantly to His children.
2. The most important offering is committing one's life to God.
3. All Christian giving should be voluntary and cheerful.
4. Stewardship is offered in accordance to one's ability and the needs of others.
5. God is no man's debtor.
6. Churches and people should be open in providing accountability in the area of finances.
7. Concern for the welfare of others creates a bond of love between the giver and the recipient.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" could be talking about more than giving of money (Acts 20:35). We also give our time and talents.

An African proverb states, "The hand that gives is always higher than the hand that receives."

Anthony Tamel in an article "Removing the Curse of Poverty" (as quoted in *Wisconsin District News*) states, "When we talk about the prosperity doctrine, we can go to the extreme and believe that God wants you to have plenty for any purpose you desire. The truth of the matter is that God wants us to have things in abundance to be used for His glory."

Tamel defines poverty as holding something in your hand for fear of letting it go. It is living in fear of not receiving. He says, "If you don't open your hand then you can never receive. You see, it is when I open my hand to let go of what is in it, that it is open for God to put something back."

God will not bless us financially if we are careless with finances, withhold it from accomplishing our vision, or hoard it.

Giving generously can break the spirit of poverty. It is through giving that we are able to prove God.

The only time we are told to prove God and to test Him is in the financial area (Malachi 3:10). What better way than to invest finances in a vision that outlasts a lifetime?

- “For the bishop (an overseer) as God's steward must be blameless...he must not be grasping and greedy for filthy lucre (financial gain)” (Titus 1:7, AMP).
- “SO THEN, let us [apostles] be looked upon as ministering servants of Christ and stewards (trustees) of the mysteries (the secret purposes) of God. Moreover, it is [essentially] required of stewards that a man should be found faithful [proving himself worthy of trust]” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, AMP).

We can also use spiritual gifts as good stewards of God’s grace.

- “As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God's many-sided grace [faithful stewards of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor]” (1 Peter 4:10, AMP).

Ask yourself these questions taken from the *Daily Walk Study Bible*:

- Are you faithful in little things? Little responsibilities? Little promises? Small amounts of time, or talents? (Luke 16:10)
- Are you faithful with money (Luke 16:11)?
- Are you faithful with the associations of others (Luke 16:12)? Are you as careful of the properties and reputation of others as you are with your own?

Accomplishing a vision will require faithful stewardship of time, talents, and treasures. These are the prices on the road to success. Like the DaVinci Awards ad says, “Honoring those who have a will and have found a way.” There is a divine will to be accomplished in the right way, and that requires stewardship.

Sensitivity

God is leading us and expects us to be sensitive to His directives. In order for this to happen we must:

- Know God
- Know His Voice

- Know how to respond
- Know the needs of others

“For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Steadfastness

Consider Daniel when he heard the decree that for thirty days no one could pray to any god or man except the king. What did he do?

- “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously” (Daniel 6:10, *AMP*).

Notice carefully these five words, “as he had done previously.”

Robert K. Hudnut in *Call Waiting* says, “Daniel makes the pages of history because he finds himself on his knees three times a day in good times and bad.”

- “Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, May your God, Whom you are serving continually, deliver you! [Psalms 34:7,19; 37:39,40; 50:15.]” (Daniel 6:16, *AMP*).

The king knew Daniel’s steadfastness, and identified his lifestyle these words, “whom you are serving continually.”

Daniel had formed a habit in his life. He adhered firmly and faithfully to what he believed. Once God has given us a vision, we must be firm, resolute, and unchanging. Our eyes are fixed on accomplishing that vision.

The early preachers “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). As a result, they turned the world upside down with their doctrine (Acts 17:6).

- “For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ” (Hebrews 3:14, *NLT*).
- “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The model of each of these side-effects of biblical vision and purpose is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His willingness to submit, surrender, suffer, sacrifice, and serve were according to the Father's design.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus was steadfast in fulfilling the reason He was born. He was an exceptional steward and always sensitive to the reason for existence. His motivation was: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-14, *NIV*). Can we settle for any lesser guiding motivation in life?

Steadfastness requires discipline. It is astonishing how much of the Christian life boils down to discipline.

- "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:7-11, *NIV*).

Theodore Roosevelt explained, "The one quality which sets one man apart from another—the key which lifts one to every aspiration while others are caught up in the mire of mediocrity is not talent, education, or educational brightness. It is self-discipline. With self-discipline, all things are possible. Without it, even the simplest goal can seem like the impossible dream."

Jim Collins in *Good to Great* studies qualities that cause companies and leaders to excel to greatness. He found that one outstanding characteristic is a commitment to discipline.

Discipline involves things we need to do, and is also required to stay away from things we don't need to do. We must discipline ourselves to:

- Pray.
- Fast.
- Study God's Word.
- Witness.
- Live a holy and righteous life.
- Overcome sin.
- Memorize Bible verses.

- Prioritize.
- Manage our time.
- Exercise properly.
- Walk in the Spirit.
- Read the Bible.

Someone has said there are two types of pain in life:

- The pain of discipline.
- The pain of regret.

There is no gain without pain.

The choice is yours. Do you want to achieve your biblical vision? Get ready for the pain of discipline.

Paul Batura in *Gadzooks* says discipline in life is like oil in an engine. It keeps the motor running. It keeps the train on the tracks. It keeps a motorboat moving.

Perhaps, this closing quotation will provide a fitting conclusion. Bobby Knight (as quoted in *The Magic of Team Work*) gave this definition of “self-discipline”:

- Doing what needs to be done.
- Doing it when it needs to be done.
- Doing it the best it can be done.
- Doing it that way every time you do it.

Study Questions

1. How does Mark’s Gospel portray Jesus? _____

2. What is submission? _____

3. What are four areas that God’s Word usually connects with submission? _____

4. What is the minister’s purpose according to Ephesians 4:12? _____

5. Name four areas where we provide service.

- 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
6. According to Hesselgrove, stewardship involves three areas. What are they? _____

7. List five of the nine insights on establishing a servant ministry. _____

8. What other types of stewardship does this lesson mention? _____

9. List three of the seven basic principles of stewardship.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
10. Quote and explain the African proverb given in this lesson. _____

11. What is poverty? _____

12. What does Anthony Tamel suggest we should do in response to poverty? _____

13. What can break the spirit of poverty? _____

14. What four things must we know to be sensitive to others?
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

15. Why does Daniel make the pages of history? _____

16. What words did the King use to identify Daniel's steadfastness? _____

17. What habit did Daniel form in his life? _____

18. Quote Acts 2:42. _____

19. Who is the role model for each of the side effects of ministry? _____

20. According to Theodore Roosevelt, what is the one quality that sets one man apart from another? _____

21. What is the one outstanding quality or characteristic that causes companies and leaders to excel to greatness? _____

22. List five areas where one might discipline himself.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

23. Provide Bobby Knight's definition of discipline. _____

24. What are the two types of pain mentioned at the close of this lesson? _____

25. Compare discipline to the oil in an engine. _____

Forever Faithful

“But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus — the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love. And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. Let me say plainly that I have been faithful. No one's damnation can be blamed on me, for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants for you” (Acts 20:24-27, *NLT*).

John C. Bowling in *Grace-Full Leadership* relates a story of a sculptor who worked vigorously on carving the head of Abraham Lincoln from a large piece of marble. The woman who cleaned his work area swept around the large stone daily. One day, as the sculptor's work progressed, she began to see Lincoln's face emerging from the marble. She quickly stopped, turned, and asked the sculptor, “Is that Master Lincoln?”

“Yes,” he answered.

“How did you know he was in there?” she asked.

When God looked at Saul He saw the chief persecutor of His Church. He envisioned what could be. He saw the Apostle Paul (then Saul) as one of the greatest missionaries and church planters of all time. How was this possible? He utilized “double vision”—the ability to see both what is and what can be. All great leaders possess this ability. Bowling said, “This double vision helps enable us to keep our sights set on the future as we deal with the daily demands of leadership.” It also enables us to see great potential in others. Stephen R. Covey in *Principle-Centered Leadership* said, “They see the oak tree in the acorn and understand the process of helping the acorn become a great oak.”

H. Dale Burke reminds us that “faith always focuses beyond the present, beyond ‘what is’ to ‘what could be.’” Faith and vision are inseparable.

Walt Disney had a vision for Disney World and Epcot (Florida) that superseded his original Disneyland (California). He passed away before its opening. Walt's widow was asked to speak at the opening ceremonies. The man doing the introduction said, “Mrs. Disney, I just wish Walt could have seen this.”

She stood up and simply said, “He did,” and sat down.

One of the executives remarked to the press, “You know it's precisely because Walt could see Disney World that it's a reality today.” Walt could see each detail of the final blueprint in his mind before the ground was ever broken. Walt was a great visionary. Warren Bennis and Burt

Nanus studied ninety top leaders. They discovered they had something in common: they all had a gripping vision.

Receiving the Vision

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:5-6).

Saul’s vision began with a knockdown experience on the Damascus Road. He asked two questions:

1. Who are you, Lord?
2. What do you want me to do?

Once he understood the answer to the first, He spent the rest of his life asking the second. He constantly endeavored to be inline with the Master’s will.

Those two questions, lead to three more. These are supplied by H. Dale Burke in his book, *Less is More*:

Destination Question	Where are you going?
Road Map Question	How will you get there?
Value versus Cost Question	What is the cost of making the trip?

Ayn Rand as quoted in *The Power Principle* said, “Throughout history, brave men and women have gone down new paths armed with nothing more than their own vision.” Visionary leaders are pathfinder and pacesetters.

Spiritual vision is a God-sized thing. It takes God’s help to accomplish. It will also take the help of others. “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

Vision is the plan God has prepared for His servant. “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

Vision (many times) outlives the visionary. Paul was a recipient of the vision given to Abraham. It was passed from generation to generation. God’s plan to bless the nations can be seen throughout His Word.

“I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house” (Isaiah 42:6-7).

“And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed” (Acts 3:25, *NIV*).

Your vision will make room for you. It will be identified by others. It will pass their test: “On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews” (Galatians 2:6-10, *NIV*).

Realigning the Vision

Is this aligned with my vision? Everything should pass this test. Ever notice what happens when a driver takes his hands off a steering wheel or handlebars? The vehicle or bicycle will start drifting a bit to the left or right. Realignment is needed to avoid an accident. A firm grip on the steering wheel helps too.

Obedience to the vision is a daily decision.

“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, ***I was not disobedient*** unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:18-19).

Repeating the Vision

Nehemiah understood the value of repeating the vision. He repeated it after twenty-eight days. There is safety in repetition.

Paul Atwater in his article “How to Start Casting a Vision for Your Church” explains that “Communicators get tired of repeating the vision just about the time when people are starting to internalize it.” He also said, “The biggest mistake I have made over the years is failing to reiterate the vision enough. Every time I go back to communicating the vision, my best leaders get fired up. They tell me that they needed the reminder.”

He suggested the following ways to remind people of the vision.

1. Commit to preaching about the vision at set times in the year.
2. Make the vision so simple it can be inserted anywhere in a message. For example, John Maxwell said, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”
3. Experiment with your own ideas. Atwater uses “Sixty seconds of vision” just before the morning sermon. Repeat key phrases or slogans.
4. Tie the vision to life-change stories.

Nelson Searcy in “Tips on Developing and Communicating Vision” adds: Verbalize clearly. If you can’t say it clearly, you don’t know it completely. If you can’t say it—how do you expect them to say it? Make it short. Here’s an example: “Passing the truth to the next generation!” (Jim Poitras). Simpler still: “Entrust.”

Searcy also made another interesting point: “You cannot lead without a vision of the future. Show me a person with vision and I’ll show you a future leader. (I say a future leader because vision must be cultivated, defined, and cast).” John C. Bowling said, “You tell me your vision, and I will tell you your future.”

Maybe that is one of the reasons God said: “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” (Habakkuk 2:2-3, *NLT*).

I love that Scripture, except the part that says the vision won’t happen right away. I like the idea of running with the vision. Words like “slow, wait patiently...” are not usually in my vocabulary. I guess that is another reason for repeating the vision. People may forget. I may forget. The good things in life are worth waiting for, working for, and worth repeating.

You can place the vision on banners, bookmarks, and bulletins. Use creative ways to keep the vision alive, and before your people.

Mary Axner in “Developing and Communicating a Vision” believes that sharing the vision is the central role of a leader. She said, “As a leader, you have to help people take your vision and make it their own.”

I enjoyed an article entitled “Vision Testers” by Melinda Poitras. She writes, “Vision often causes change no-one else can even believe possible (or even want, for that matter)...No good change comes without opposition. There are going to be people who criticize you, make fun of you, and more likely than not, try to stop you.” Sanballat became incensed and ridiculed the wall-builders, throwing insults in their faces. Melinda points out their apt response. They prayed. And, they kept right on working. They knew they had a good work to accomplish. Nothing could stop them. Sanballat and a few others even tried attacking them, but they

“trusted in God, knowing that everything would turn out alright, and it did.” Nehemiah remained aligned to his vision!

Another word for “realignment” is “focus” Vision provides focus. Unfortunately, we can not set our vision on “auto-focus.” Obtaining and maintaining correct focus doesn’t just happen. It takes realignment and refocusing. Otherwise, our vision will become blurred. Paul advised that we stay in focus: “keep our eyes fixed...” Jesus pursued His vision with focus: endured the cross, scorned shame, and fulfilled His purpose: providing salvation for all who believe. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 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” (Hebrews 12:1-3, *NIV*).

Reviving the Vision

Revival refers to bringing something back to life. Do not allow your vision to die. Breathe new life into it! Wake up your dreams!

“But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, is a native of Ghana. He recently returned home a hero. Billboards project his picture, the United Nations logo and proclaim, “Welcome Home. You have made Ghana proud!”

In 1997 Kofi Annan addressed MIT graduates and told of his own experience as an MIT student. Walking along the Charles River in his first term, he reflected on survival in the midst of over-achievers. The answer came to him, “Follow your own inner compass....Listen to your own drummer. To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to go there.” (Sales 1997) Kofi Annan was able to realign himself with his vision throughout his forty year tenure with the United Nations.

H. Dale Burke said, “When your memories are more exciting than your dreams, you’ve begun to die.” It’s time to revive your vision!

I like talking about the future. I plan to live there. Bill Allen in *Built to Last* said, “Boeing (*great airplane builders*) is always reaching out to tomorrow. This can only be accomplished by people who live, breathe, eat and sleep what they are doing” (*italics added*).

We need to be consumed by the vision. We should possess a burning desire or passion to see the vision come to pass. There must be fire in our souls.

Realizing the Vision

Realizing your vision will be costly. It will require many things.

Commitment: It's a daily decision and struggle. "Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying, also]. For whoever is bent on saving his [temporal] life [his comfort and security here] shall lose it [eternal life]; and whoever loses his life [his comfort and security here] for My sake shall find it [life everlasting]" (Matthew 16:24-25, AMP).

Sacrifice: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Willingness to change: "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Corinthians 9:22, NIV).

Discipline: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:21-27, NIV).

Willingness to improve/continuous improvement: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended..." (Philippians 3:12-13).

Contentment: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Faithfulness: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

Hard work: Good things don't just happen. You get what you have planned and worked for. Stephen Covey in *Principle-Centered Leadership* refers to the law of the farm: "The quick easy, free, and fun approach won't work on the farm because there we're subject to natural laws and governing principles...The only thing that endures over time is the law of the farm: I must prepare the ground, put in the seed, cultivate it, weed it, water it, then gradually nurture growth and development to full maturity...There is no quick fix, where you can just move in and make everything right with a positive mental attitude and a bunch of success formulas. The law of the harvest governs."

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:7-10).

Rejoicing the Vision

The close of Paul's life found him in a damp, dark, dirty prison cell. Yet, he was not discouraged, defeated, or demoralized. He remained faithful!

"As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me — the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return" (2 Timothy 4:6-8, *NLT*).

James Dobson and Gary Bauer in *Children at Risk* share a story that illustrates the point. A Sunday morning terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut left hundreds of Americans killed or wounded as they slept. A few days later, the Marine Commandant visited some of the wounded soldiers in the hospital. Among them was a Corporal that was severely wounded in the incident. He had so many tubes running in and out of his body that he looked more like a machine than a man. As the Commandant visited him, he motioned for a piece of paper and a pen. Racked with pain, he struggled to write a brief note. On it were two simple words— "Semper Fi"—the Latin motto of the Marines meaning "forever faithful."

Here is a glimpse of the end result of Paul's vision: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9-10).

Surely Paul heard those treasured words, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful...Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:23, *NIV*).

Paul was faithful to his vision. He passed it on to the next generation. Eventually it has been passed to you and me. May those that follow after us find us forever faithful.

"O may all who come behind us find us faithful, may the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe, and the lives we live inspire them to obey. O may all who come behind us find us faithful."(Jon Mohr)

Study Questions

1. What is double vision? _____

2. Saul's vision began with what two questions?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
3. The questions mentioned in answering question two above lead us to three more questions. What are they?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
4. What is vision? _____

5. Explain how vision (at times) outlives us. _____

6. Express what is meant by realigning with the vision. _____

7. What was Paul's vision? _____

8. What happens when a leader repeats the vision on a regular basis? _____

9. Identify three ways to remind people of the vision.
 - 1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

10. Why is it important to be able to state one's vision clearly? _____

11. List some of things vision costs or requires. _____

12. List the steps from receiving the vision to rejoicing the vision. _____

13. What was the end result of Paul's vision? _____

Additional Notes
