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Vision Day: Capturing the Power of Vision

Elmer Towns

Vision Day

**Capturing
the Power of
VISION**

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Capturing the Power of Vision

by Elmer Towns

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Introduction

A *Vision Day* campaign may be the most significant investment you will ever make in your ministry! Let me explain.

When I wrote *The Eight Laws of Leadership*, I called the first law, “The Law of Dreams.” When I teach these laws I sometimes call it, “The Law of Vision.” It means, “when people buy into your vision (dreams), they buy into your leadership.” To be a great leader, you must dream great dreams and capture God’s vision for your life and ministry.

Vision Day is designed to help you, your lay leaders, and your entire congregation capture God’s vision for your church. It is not a church growth campaign that will produce an immediate attendance increase. Rather, it is a foundational campaign to help you establish a unified purpose in your church that will become the basis of future growth. *Vision Day’s* strength is found in unifying the whole church around a single vision of the future.

George Barna defines vision for ministry as “a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.” Vision is one of the few things characteristic of every growing church. When everyone in the church knows where the church is going, the whole church will buy into the vision and work together to achieve outreach to the unchurched and give more glory to God.

As you work through *Vision Day* in your church, three things will happen. First, you will discover God’s vision for your ministry. Second, you will communicate principles which will enable your people to dream great dreams and understand God’s vision for their life. Third, as

you share God's vision with your lay leaders and the larger congregation, your church will become more focused and ultimately more effective in ministry.

Vision begins with the pastor. Therefore, as you prepare to lead your church through this process, ask God to give you His vision for your church.

May God help you in your pursuit of His vision for your ministry. Have a great *Vision Day* as you launch into a brand new phase of ministry in your church.

Elmer L. Towns



About the Author

Dr. Elmer Towns is Dean of Religion at Liberty University's Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia. He is cofounder of and a leading seminar speaker for Church Growth Institute.

Towns began his first pastorate in Westminster Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia, in 1952. Through the years he has taught in several Christian colleges and served in administrative positions as well, including President of Winnipeg Bible College, Executive Vice President of Baptist University of America, and cofounder of Liberty University.

Towns has authored nearly 60 books, of which three - *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Made Them Grow*, *America's Fastest Growing Churches*, and *Church Aflame* - were placed in the Christian Bookseller Association's list of best-sellers.

Towns is a man of vision who acts on what God reveals to him. As cofounder of Liberty University, he saw the need for a powerful institution of higher education that was committed to both academic excellence and an action-oriented curriculum of practical Christian service. He was one of the first to see the need for networking evangelism that was reflective of Baby Boomers entering the church. So he developed the *Friend Day* packet through Church Growth Institute, and it has become the "most used" material to guide a church into an evangelistic event. Over 30,000 churches have purchased a *Friend Day* packet, resulting in over 10 million people visiting churches.

Towns's academic credentials include undergraduate studies at Columbia Bible College in Columbia, South Carolina, and a B.A. from Northwestern College in Minneapolis, Minnesota; a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas; an M.A. from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas; an M.R.E. from Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois; and the D. Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

From the Publisher

Having vision is the key to a successful future for your church. For without vision, it is impossible to see where your church is headed and what direction to take in order to keep on the right path to growth and accomplishment.

Vision Day will help you lead your church into the future. It will help you develop a vision statement specifically for your church and teach you how to implement the fundamental aspects of the vision statement.

Dr. Elmer Towns is a leading authority in church growth and has developed this program in an effort to encourage and teach churches everywhere how to dream big dreams and make things happen—things that will change the course of your church's future.

As you implement *Vision Day*, may God bless your effort in creating a new vision for your church.

Larry Gilbert
President of Church Growth Institute

Who is Church Growth Institute?

“*Providing practical tools for church growth*” is the guiding purpose of *Church Growth Institute (CGI)* in Forest, Virginia (a suburb of Lynchburg). Larry Gilbert, a former businessman in Maryland, began CGI in 1984 as a joint venture with Dr. Elmer Towns, a prolific author, popular seminar speaker, and dean of Liberty University's B. R. Lakin School of Religion.

Through producing of organized, logical, and practical resource materials, CGI complements the leadership and ministry of the local church as well as the teaching of seminaries and other higher education institutions. Our organization offers reasonably priced books, workbooks, cassettes, videotapes, and related supplies, and provides services such as seminars to pastors and church leaders.

CGI materials are designed to promote church growth by training leaders and offering ideas and programs that are proven to result in church growth by utilizing the gifts and abilities of all church members. The use of these resources will help churches influence the lost to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and lead Christians to maturity.

In everything we do, whether our job tasks, customer service, seminars, or resource material, our goal is to be *practical*. We want to be helpful to our customers. We want our seminars to be informative. And we want our materials to be easy to use and understand. According to our customers, we have succeeded. With each new product, we continue to press onward to meet our customer's ministry needs.

Church Growth Institute's website: <http://www.churchgrowth.org>

How to Use This Resource Packet

Church Growth Institute wants to make your ministry easier and more productive. This resource packet is designed with that purpose in mind.

Before you start organizing and using the campaign, look over each section carefully and familiarize yourself with the contents of the packet. Everything you need for a successful ministry has been put into a handy reference format.

Our goal is to produce a packet of effective materials to teach and motivate people and to make that packet practical and easy-to-use.

Pastor's Planning Agenda

As you prepare to lead your church with vision, it will help you to read the entire contents of this packet first. As you plan and implement *Vision Day*, check off each item as it is completed. This will help you to keep track of what has been done and what needs to be done.

- Read the article entitled, "How to Get Vision," and become inspired to gain God's vision for your life and ministry.
- To effectively implement this program, we suggest that you purchase a copy of *The Power of Vision* by George Barna for every member of your Vision Task Force.
- Assemble a Vision Task Force to help you work through the process of discovering God's vision for your church. This task force should include the pastor and your most influential lay leaders. It is important that each member of the task force be deeply committed to knowing and doing God's will. Also, a smaller working task force will be more effective than a larger, more representative task force. Choose people who have strengths in gathering and interpreting data. On the lines below, list those most qualified to serve on your Vision Task Force.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- Review the process outlined in the article "How to Get Vision," and share the concept of *Vision Day* with your key lay leaders. Explain that *Vision Day* will guide your church

through an open-ended process which bring about making significant changes in your church. The result will be a church deeply committed to fulfilling God's vision for that church. Share the substance of "Your Ministry Will Benefit," chapter eight in *The Power of Vision*. Secure your group's enthusiastic support prior to proceeding.

- Enlist members to serve on the Vision Task Force. Briefly explain the process the church will enter into and the important role of this task force. Be sure task force members understand they are making a significant commitment for a six-week period. Your Vision Task Force should include your lay leadership team (i.e. official church board).
- View Teacher's Worktext entitled, "*Seeing the Invisible*," from Church Growth Institute. These will be distributed to Sunday School teachers at a later date. Also, you may wish to order copies of *The Power of Vision*.
- Enlist members to help with setting up for the meal on *Vision Day*. The meal could be "pot-luck" or the church could use the convention facilities of a hotel or camp.

Week One • Date _____

Sunday

- In some churches, it may be wise to have the church leadership board (or even the congregation) pass the following motion:

Moved, that a Vision Task Force be formed for the purpose of gathering data concerning the present health of our church and the nature of the broader community around our church family with a view to grasping God's vision for our church and proposing a vision statement which may serve as a basis for future ministry.

Monday

- Meet with your worship leader. Explain that God gives His people a new song for a new vision. Ask him to find or write a song or chorus on a theme consistent with the true meaning of the term "vision" that could be adopted as a new vision song. The song should be singable with a melody that sticks with people. If a song is chosen which is not in public domain or written by the worship leader, be certain permission is granted to reproduce the song in your ministry.
- Prepare materials for printer.

Tuesday

- Conduct the first of six weekly meetings of the Vision Task Force. Each weekly meeting will consist of three parts. First, study the principles of vision. Second, discuss data collected by individual task force members. Third, compose a report summarizing the findings.

At this meeting, review the article entitled, "How to Get Vision." Assign the following responsibilities to individual task force members:

- (1) Complete a demographic study of the church.
- (2) Complete a demographic study of the community.
- (3) Measure the ministry perception in the church.
- (4) Measure the ministry perception in the community.

Depending on the size of the task force, you may have two or three people working together on some of the assignments. Also, be sure to give those responsible a copy of the appropriate guidelines for accomplishing the assigned task.

Take time at this meeting to specifically define the scope of your community (i.e., a two-mile radius of the church building; the northeast corner of town; people living in the Riverside and Mission Heights communities, etc.)

Wednesday

- Take materials to printer.

Week Two • Date _____

Sunday

- During the worship service, introduce task force members to the church and formally commission them to the task as defined in the motion. Have a key lay leader not serving on the task force lead the church in a dedicatory prayer.

Tuesday

- Vision Task Force meeting. Begin by completing the first Bible study in *The Power of Vision*. Then discuss the demographic report on the church. Prepare a summary sheet of your findings and recommendations.

Week Three • Date _____

Sunday

- Use the *Vision Day* bulletin inserts. Explain the process by which the church will study vision and consider God's vision for their church over the next four weeks. Have a special prayer for *Vision Day* in the service.
- Distribute the *Vision Day* Teacher's Worktext entitled, *Seeing the Invisible—Learning to Dream from a Dreamer*, to the teachers. Also, make and distribute copies of the lesson outlines in the teacher's worktext. Teacher's should have a copy of all four outlines for each student.
- You may wish to begin preaching on vision today. If so, use the video message entitled, "How to Get Vision" as the basis of your sermon.

Tuesday

- Vision Task Force meeting. Begin by completing the second Bible study in *The Power of Vision*. Then discuss the demographic report on the community. Prepare a summary sheet of your findings and recommendations to be included in the task force report.
- Send a letter inviting everyone to attend the Vision Day workshop.

Wednesday

- Pick up materials from printer.

Week Four • Date _____

Sunday

- Teach Lesson #1: "Dreaming Beyond Your Limitations" from the Teacher's Worktext.
- Begin using the *Vision Day* bulletins. Continue using them through *Vision Day*.
- Have a member of the task force present a brief summary report based on the findings of the demographic survey of the community. Have special prayer for the community during the service.
- Introduce your new vision song in the worship service. Preach Sermon #1: "A Vision of God" (Rev. 1:9-20).

Tuesday

- Vision Task Force meeting. Begin by completing the third Bible study in *The Power of Vision*. Then discuss the perceptions of ministry in your church and community. Be prepared for some surprises. Prepare a summary sheet of your findings and recommendations to be included in the task force report.

During the Week

- Have callers phone each member and adherent to confirm their involvement in the Vision Day workshop.

Week Five • Date _____

Sunday

- Teach Lesson #2: “Dreaming in Dark Hours and Dungeons” from the Teacher’s Worktext.
- Have a member of the task force present a brief summary report based on the findings of the church survey.
- Have a special prayer for the church during the worship service.
- Preach Sermon #2: “A Vision of Self” (Isa. 6:1-13).

Tuesday

- Vision Task Force meeting. Begin by reading the following passages: Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 1:5; Acts 2:40-47; John 4:21-24. Discuss the question, “What do these verses tell us about God’s vision for the church?” Then guide the task force to write a preliminary vision statement by asking, “In light of what we have learned about our church and community in recent weeks, what emphasis do you think God wants us to develop in our situation?” As the group discusses various ideas, look for consensus upon which the group can draft a preliminary vision statement. This statement should be committed to paper by the end of the meeting (see “How to Write a Vision Statement”). Suggested Vision Statement #1: “*Turning Nominal Believers into Dedicated Disciples.*” Suggested Vision Statement #2: “*Enter to Worship, Depart to Serve.*” While the suggested vision statements will not fit all churches, they are included as models that are used by some churches.

Wednesday

- Send each member of the task force a copy of the preliminary vision statement, asking them to prayerfully consider any revisions which should be made to it at the next meeting. Thank them for the work they have put into this project.

- Have the office staff prepare a master of the Vision Task Force report. The report should be prepared in parts as discussed in the article, “How to Prepare the Vision Task Force Report”. Make a copy for each member of the task force.

During the Week

- Have callers recontact those who are uncommitted to attending the workshop in an attempt to convince them to attend.

Week Six • Date _____

Sunday

- Teach Lesson #3: “Opening the Door to Achieving Your Dreams” from the Teacher’s Worktext.
- Have a member of the task force present a brief summary report bridging the church to the community through side door ministries (see “How to Bridge Your Church to Your Community”). Have special prayer for existing side-door ministries of the church.
- Preach Sermon #3: “A Vision for Direction” (Acts 16:6-10).

Monday

- Contact those responsible for arranging details for the workshop to confirm everything is prepared.
- Contact those responsible for arranging details for the meal on *Vision Day*.

Tuesday

- Send out a reminder to each church family about the change in schedule this Sunday.
- Vision Task Force meeting. Distribute copies of the task force report including the preliminary vision statement to each group member. Explain that the purpose of this meeting is to evaluate and revise as necessary the proposed vision statement. Lead the group in a study of “The Character of God’s Vision,” chapter seven in *The Power of Vision*. As you consider each characteristic, evaluate and revise as necessary your preliminary statement. At the conclusion of the study, ask group members if there are further revisions which they would like to propose. By consensus, agree on a proposed vision statement to be submitted to the church. Review the twenty “Myths That Mar Vision,” chapter four in *The Power of Vision* with the task force and thank them again for their work. Conclude with a time of prayer for the church as they consider adopting God’s vision for the church.

Wednesday

- Include the proposed vision statement in the master copy of the Vision Task Force report.

Week Seven • Date _____

Vision Day

- Teach Lesson #4: “When Dreams Become Real” from the Teacher’s Worktext.
- Print the proposed vision statement in the *Vision Day* bulletin and refer to it during the service. Explain that this statement will be examined more closely during the afternoon workshop.
- Preach Sermon #4: “A Vision for Ministry” (John 4:34-42).
- At the conclusion of the morning service, pass out the Vision Day schedule and worksheets. Be sure to include specific directions to the location of the workshop and the time the meal will be served.

Tuesday

- Write a personal letter to each member of the Vision Task Force thanking him or her for their individual contribution to both the group and task force report. Letters should be personal, not generic.
- Send a thank-you letter to each one involved in putting the workshop together.

Beyond Vision Day

- Post your vision statement in a prominent spot in the building.
- Publish a special edition of your church newsletter highlighting the new vision for the church.
- Begin printing your vision statement on church publications (i.e., the newsletter, stationery, bulletin, etc.).
- Sing your new vision song at least once a month in worship service.
- Ask ministry leaders to write a vision statement for their ministry area based on the vision statement for the church.
- Have each ministry write short and long-term goals based on their role in accomplishing the vision.
- Meet with your lay leaders and begin the process of preparing a five-year ministry plan for your church. Once established, this plan should be reviewed and updated annually.

- Appoint a task force of individuals burdened for specific new ministries suggested by the vision statement to collect data and propose a plan for implementing these ministries into the life of the church.
- If your church does not already do so, implement a zero-based approach to preparing your annual budget. Under this plan, each ministry area will make specific budget requests based on ministry goals for the year, coming out of the vision statement. This forces ministry leaders to review their commitment to the mission statement annually and holds them accountable to spend funds in a manner most likely to help the church realize its vision.
- Consider Vision Day for those who will join the church as you continue growing. One church does this with a Discovery Day for those who have begun attending the church recently. The Saturday morning workshop begins with breakfast and introduces people to the vision and ministry of the church. It also includes an opportunity for people to discover their spiritual gifts, become involved in a small group, and make specific commitments to ministry based on their gifts, passions, and learned abilities.

Reports and Surveys

HOW TO PREPARE THE VISION TASK FORCE REPORT

Early in your *Vision Day* campaign, a task force is appointed to collect data and develop a proposed vision statement. This task force meets for six weeks. At the end of that period, the task force report is communicated first to the lay leadership team, then to the entire church (see “How to Communicate the Vision Task Force Report”).

Much of the data collected and other work done by the task force will not find its way into their final report. The report should be a summary of their findings and recommendations. A file containing the original data should be maintained in the church office so that material will remain available when needed, but the report itself will include only highlights of the work done.

The proposed six-week schedule for the Vision Task Force suggests various aspects of research should be discussed each week. Based on that schedule, the following guidelines could be used to assist you in preparing the task force report.

WEEK ONE

Prepare a copy of the motion calling for the appointment of the task force and identifying their responsibility. Include on this initial page any necessary explanations including a specific identification of the church community.

WEEK TWO

Prepare a one to two-page summary of your findings in the demographic study of the church. This part of the report should be labeled “Part One.”

WEEK THREE

Prepare a one to two-page summary of your findings in the demographic study of the community. This part of the report should be labeled “Part Two.”

WEEK FOUR

Prepare a summary sheet of your findings and recommendations based on the ministry perception surveys. This part of the report should be labeled “Part Three.”

WEEK FIVE

Write an interim vision statement based on the data collected and input of task force members. Circulate this statement among task force members for their further consideration.

WEEK SIX

Add the edited vision statement to the end of the report. Label this page, “Proposed Vision Statement.” Make a copy of the entire report for each task force member and circulate it. Ask each group member to check it for accuracy. Make any necessary corrections to the master copy and keep it in the church office. Copies of this report will be made as needed.

HOW TO WRITE A VISION STATEMENT

The ultimate objective of the Vision Task Force is to propose a vision statement which will be the basis for ministry planning in the years to come. Because vision is based on an accurate understanding of both the church and community, the demographic studies and ministry perceptions should be completed and analyzed prior to undertaking this project. The following guidelines are suggested to help you articulate the unique vision God has for your church.

- Be sure you understand the nature of vision before beginning. George Barna defines vision as “a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants . . . based on an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.”
- Read the following passages and list characteristics of God’s vision for His church: Matthew 28:18-20; John 4:21-24; Acts 2:40-47; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 1:5. What other Scriptures suggest aspects of God’s vision for His church?

• Understand while there are many aspects to God's vision for His church, He tends to have a different ministry emphasis for different churches in different communities. This becomes obvious in a comparison of the different strengths of various New Testament churches (i.e., the evangelistic outreach in Jerusalem; the missions emphasis of Antioch; the commitment to Bible study in Berea; the gift-oriented ministry of Corinth; the revivalistic emphasis in Ephesus, etc.). Based on the demographic survey of your church and ministry perception surveys, what are the dominant strengths in your church? This may be an indication of the emphasis God has in mind for your church.

• Another factor resulting in the different emphasis in God's vision for each church is the nature of the community in which that church is located. This is evident in the New Testament not only in the difference between Jewish and Gentile congregations, but also in differences between different Gentile cities (i.e., Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, Rome, etc.). Based on the results of the demographic study of your community and your community's ministry perception, what kind of church would be most effective in reaching your community?

• A third factor to consider in determining God's vision for your church is gifting. As the Lord of the Church, God reserves the right to gift people in the church for the ministry He wants accomplished. An especially large number of people gifted in a particular area tends to result in a distinctive ministry emphasis. Which of the following statements is most true about your church?

1. We are primarily interested in reaching people for Christ by any and every effective means possible.
2. We see ourselves as the social conscience of the community and are compelled to speak to injustice.
3. We are committed to teaching the Bible to people through expositional preaching and Bible study groups.
4. We exist to help people apply biblical principles to their problems so they can experience an abundant life.
5. We are a caring community of believers committed to helping one another live the Christian life.
6. We function as a compassionate community of believers reaching out to those largely neglected by others.
7. We are a worshipping community that expresses our love to God in weekly celebration.
8. We view ourselves as a blessed people charged with the task of supporting missions on a worldwide basis.
9. We seek to build strong families and minister to their total needs and reach out to families not in our fellowship.

- Review your ministry perception questionnaires. How did people complete the statements, “The one thing I really like about our church is...” and “I would really like to see us do something about...?” Are there common themes in these responses? Do these responses relate to a specific emphasis in God’s vision for His church?

- Take your responses to the above steps and attempt to write a paragraph describing this ideal church. Are common themes emphasized in your responses to each step? Can this paragraph be edited into one or two lines summarizing the kind of church you think God wants you to become?

- Have each member of the Vision Task Force complete this process and bring their summary statement to the task force meeting. Is a consensus of ideas repeated in each of these statements? By consensus, draft an interim vision statement which includes all the ideas put forth in the individual statements.

- At the next group meeting, reintroduce the interim vision statement. Using the guidelines suggested by Barna in chapter seven, evaluate your vision statement making changes where necessary. Is any aspect of the uniqueness of your church neglected in this statement? Are some aspects of your statement non-essential and could they be removed without significantly changing the vision of what you believe God wants your church to become? Should any terms or expressions in your vision statement be defined or clarified?

- Rewrite the vision statement including all that is essential to describing your perception of God’s vision for your church. Does this statement have the potential of motivating people to work for its accomplishment? Is the end result of sufficient value to warrant a significant investment of time and resources to achieve the goal? Is this the kind of church you would want for your friends and family?

- Submit the proposed vision statement to your lay leadership team for their consideration. Listen carefully to their evaluation of the statement. Be able to adequately answer their questions and/or consider making changes to the wording of the statement to make it clearer.

- Come to an agreement on the final wording of the vision statement. Once published, it is unlikely to be changed for some time. Prepare a teaching outline of the statement as part of the *Vision Day* workshop.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE THE VISION TASK FORCE REPORT

Sometimes a well-done report by a special task force fails to effect any significant change even though it is well documented and is based on good reasoning. The failure to effect significant change is not due to the report but due to the manner in which the report is communicated. Because the work done by the Vision Task Force is so important, a special strategy has been developed to insure the report is communicated first to the church in a way in which it can be fully appreciated and understood.

The task force report is the result of six weeks of intensive work collecting and interpreting data which is foundational to understanding the vision statement. Just as the task force had time to internalize the data collected and develop a carefully worded vision statement, so others may need time to consider the reasoning which has so strongly impacted this statement. This campaign suggests the task force report be communicated to the church over a period of four weeks.

The sequence in which the report is communicated is as follows:

1. Part One: communicate the church demographics summary in week one.
2. Part Two: communicate the community demographics summary in week two.
3. Part Three: communicate the summary of ministry perception in the church and community and recommendations regarding bridging the church to the community through side-door ministries in week three.
4. Communicate the proposed vision statement in week four.

When communicating the report to the church, an overhead transparency should be prepared highlighting the most significant observations and recommendations of each section of the report. Make copies of the report available on request.

A great deal of work has gone into preparing your new vision statement. Be sure the appearance of your report reflects the quality of the work done by your task force.

HOW TO BRIDGE YOUR CHURCH TO YOUR COMMUNITY

As you evaluate the results of your research, you will find two kinds of unreached people living in your community. Some unsaved people will be part of the extended social network of existing church members or could easily become a part of that network. The most effective way to reach those people is through Team Evangelism in which every Christian develops a strategy aimed at networking friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors to Christ and salvation.

The second group of people are harder to reach. These people have no apparent ties to your church or individual members in the church. In all probability, your church does not have any existing ministries aimed at reaching these people for Christ. The following steps are suggested to guide you as you develop side-door ministries to bridge your church to your community. These side-door ministries will also be effective in the networking strategy of individual members as they seek to reach people in their personal sphere of influence.

List the people groups identified in your demographic survey. Which appear potentially most responsive to the Gospel? Which are being effectively evangelized by other churches? Which could be most easily assimilated into your ministry? Based on these considerations, prioritize your list of people groups making #1 the group which should be given highest consideration as a target group for the outreach ministries of your church.

Begin praying for that group. Nothing of eternal consequence ever happens apart from prayer. Ask God to work in the life of that people group to make them responsive to the Gospel and receptive to the church.

Ask God for a person with a burden. In developing new ministries, give priority to investing in people with a burden over ministry programs or technology. Both can be a part of an effective ministry. Buying a program or new technology when there is no one to use it effectively is poor stewardship of the resources God has entrusted to you.

Study the unique culture of your target group. Listen to their music to get a feel for the heart of the culture. Some people groups are vastly different, i.e. they speak another language, have different social customs, eat different food, etc. Other groups differ in more subtle ways, i.e. they speak with a slightly different accent, have different values which may not be readily apparent in their lifestyle, etc. Learn to think like a member of the targeted people group.

Based on your understanding of the people group culture, identify and list the most common felt needs among the group. What sort of things could you do as an individual and/or church to meet these needs?

Make contact with members of the people group and build relationships through repeated acts of kindness. Be a friend to those you are trying to reach. The following examples of how Christians have crossed barriers to make contact with members of a distinct people group and begin developing relationships are offered to help you think of ways to make contact with your people group.

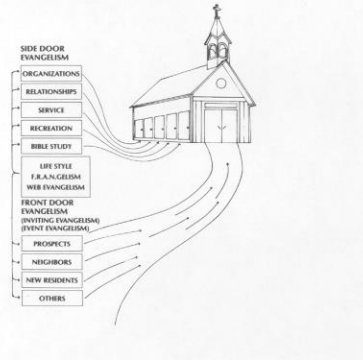
1. A white male working for a Christian radio station became burdened for black teenage boys living in the inner city. He began showing up in neighborhood parks with a basketball. Within two months he was leading a weekly Bible study for a group of boys in a local community center.

2. A retired English teacher wanted to help her church reach Hispanic farm workers. She volunteered her services through a local school board to tutor students in remedial English. Her interest in the children was appreciated and she and her husband established a social relationship with three Mexican families in an area trailer park.

3. A homemaker whose children were in school became burdened for the Asian immigrants moving into her city. She and several friends began holding English as a Second Language classes in her church. She developed relationships with several ladies who became a part of the church's Ladies' Coffee Hour.

Network people to your church through existing side-door ministries. Choose ministries which can help people accomplish their goals and ministries, and in which your new friend is most likely to meet other caring Christians in a nonthreatening environment.

Begin developing new side-door ministries to meet felt needs common to members of your people group. The specific ministries which will be most effective in your church depends on the felt needs of your group.



Consider the following list and add your own ideas.

1. A church concerned with helping single-parent families offered free oil changes, tune-ups, and tire rotations to single moms on Saturday mornings in their church parking lot.
2. A group concerned about drug abuse among young people began a midnight basketball league to get young people off the street from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. on Friday evenings, the time most drugs were sold on the street in their city.
3. A church reaching out to young professionals in their community cosponsored a time management seminar with the local Chamber of Commerce at an area country club.
4. A church wanting to reach a group of recent immigrants had a missionary on furlough conduct a number of orientation seminars in their mother tongue. The seminar was recorded and copies were distributed free to members of that group, even after the missionary returned to the field.

Begin the process of stair-stepping people to Christ and salvation. The emphasis of stair-stepping is to slowly move people to the place where they are most likely to give serious consideration to receiving Christ as Savior. This process involves developing a growing relationship with your new friend and networking him or her to a variety of church-related functions where the Gospel is presented in a nonthreatening way. Your witness strategy should also include times when you share your personal testimony, appropriate gospel literature and the plan of salvation with your friend.

When your new friends are converted, encourage them to network others in their personal sphere of influence to Christ. Just as Jesus reached the woman at the well to reach the entire city, the few members of the people group you reach for Christ will be more effective in reaching other members of that group with the Gospel.

HOW TO DO A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF YOUR CHURCH

Some of the data gathered by the Vision Task Force will be collected by doing a demographic study of your church. The following checklist of questions and assignments are suggested to help you collect all the relevant data and gain an accurate picture of your church.

- Secure a current copy of your church's membership list. In some churches, this list may also include others in your church family who have not formally joined the church. Be sure you have the correct address and phone number for everyone on the list.

- Secure or compile a list of all ministries in the church. Identify the target group for each ministry (i.e., senior adults, teenage girls, new immigrants, etc.), the ministry emphasis of each group (i.e., worship, education, fellowship, evangelism, service), number of workers, number of people being served by that ministry, sources of income, time and space utilized in the church facilities, budgeted costs for the current year, and specific ministry achievements in their area of emphasis. Record this information on a standard chart.

- Answer the following questions based on the data collected on your church's ministries:

1. Which ministries are duplicating efforts by seeking to accomplish the same thing among the same group?
2. Which ministries have ceased to be effective in accomplishing their goals?
3. Which ministries are working to achieve goals perceived to be inconsistent with the apparent direction of the church?
4. Which ministries exist without a clear sense of direction?
5. Which ministries appear highly successful in achieving their stated objectives?
6. Which groups in the church appear to be largely neglected by existing church ministries?
7. Based on the ministry emphasis of these ministries, what is the present ministry emphasis of your church?

- List the specific ministry tasks being done by each person on the church list. Compile a summary sheet listing how many people are doing 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 or more jobs in the church. Answer the following questions based on this data:

1. What can you conclude about the commitment level of your members?
2. Which members could be considered in a high-risk group as potential candidates of ministry burnout?

3. What training should be offered to provide equipped workers who could release overworked members from some responsibilities?

4. What support systems are in place for those actively involved in specific ministries?

- Attempt to list all existing ministries on a one-page chart identifying both formal and informal lines of communication. What does this page tell you about the quality of communication between ministry leaders in your church?

- Prepare a master calendar for one month of ministry in your church. List each existing ministry on the calendar at each place a regular meeting would be held. Remember, to include all ministries including those which meet monthly (i.e., men's breakfast, etc.). When the calendar is completed, ask the following questions:

1. What does this calendar tell you about the amount of time people are expected to attend church functions?

2. What does this calendar tell you about the utilization of present facilities?

3. How does this schedule help or hinder families in other areas of responsibility (i.e., building a healthy family life, making contact with unsaved neighbors, fulfilling civic responsibilities, etc.)?.

4. How could this schedule be streamlined to make room for other ministries or free up time for families heavily involved in church life?

- Based on the data collected and your answers to the questions asked, prepare a one to two-page summary of the data and your conclusions.

Summary Report for (Ministry)

Target Group: _____

Ministry Emphasis: _____

Workers: _____

People Served: _____

Sources of Income: _____

Meeting Times: _____

Meeting Place: _____

Budget: _____

Ministry Achievements: _____

HOW TO DO A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF YOUR COMMUNITY

Some of the data gathered by the Vision Task Force will be collected by doing a demographic study of your community. The following checklist of questions and assignments are suggested to help you collect all the relevant data and gain an accurate picture of your community.

- Begin by identifying your community. Write out a description of the community you are studying. As you set the boundaries of your community, compare it with a map of the poles used during municipal and state elections. You may want to adjust your boundaries slightly to conform.

- Determine what you are looking for so you will know when you have found it. Write a list of questions to guide you in your study. Be sure to include the following questions.

1. What identifiable people groups live within the community?
2. What felt needs are characteristic of each of these groups?
3. Which of these groups are most responsive to the Gospel?
4. Which of these groups are being effectively evangelized by other evangelical churches?
5. Which of these groups are not being effectively evangelized?
6. Which of these groups are already represented in the church?

- Consult available sources of information. Your local library may have a copy of the most recent census of your community. Also, you may wish to contact local business or political organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce or a major political party. These and other similar agencies use this information regularly and often produce their own summaries. In many growing towns and cities, the municipal department responsible for planning and development can supply you with a demographic study of the city and detailed projections for the next 10 to 25 years.

- Walk or drive through the community to observe it from a different perspective. Do this even if you live in the community and think you know your city well. You might want to do this on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon when the whole family is most likely to be home. As you observe the community, use the following as a guide to help you see.

1. What kind of homes do people live in (i.e., condos, single-family dwellings, apartments, etc.)? What kind of cars are parked in their driveways? How well is the property maintained? What does this suggest about the economic status of the community?

2. Where do the families with young children live? Look for swings, bikes, toys in the yard and children playing in a community park.
3. What kind of families do you see (i.e., nuclear families, extended families, single-parent families, adults without children, etc.)?
4. What visible minorities live in the community? What languages are families using as they talk to each other? This will give you insight into various people groups which may be defined by ethnic background.
5. How old is the community? How old are the buildings? How old are the people living in the buildings? What evidence is there of decay, renewal, and/or growth in the community?

- Review the statistical information and understand what it is saying. The character of your community will impact the character of your church. Use the following questions to guide you in interpreting the data.

1. Is the city growing, stable, or declining in size?
2. Where do the people living in your city come from? Are there significant groups moving from the city to the country? Are they moving from another state to your community? Have they immigrated from another country to your community?
3. What mother tongues are spoken in your community? Is there a significant group speaking a language other than that in which you minister? Remember, even when an immigrant has learned English, he or she is usually more reachable if spoken to in his or her mother tongue.
4. What information have you collected about the character of families in your community? How many non-family households are there in your community? What is the divorce rate? How many single-parent families are there in your community? What is the average number of people per household?
5. What is the economic status of your community? Rather than looking for an average income, break down the number of people in each income group. If possible, identify the average income for each neighborhood in your community. How many people are unemployed or on some form of government assistance? How many people are self-employed? What kind of jobs do people in your community do (i.e., factory work, office work, service industry, etc.)?

- Summarize the data you have collected into a community profile. Be sure to include a list of significant people groups living in your community. Use the following guidelines to identify a people group.

1. Group people based on a common racial or ethnic background.

2. Look for distinct linguistic groups. Often a linguistic group may be related to an ethnic group but not always. Spanish-speaking people from Europe, Mexico, and Argentina probably represent three people groups rather than one.
3. Group people on the basis of their economic status. You will develop different ministries for factory workers, yuppies, and the unemployed.
4. Group people on the basis of marital and family status. Single-parent families have different needs than extended families. Divorced persons have different needs than never-married adults. Seniors have different needs than newlyweds.
5. Group people on the basis of their place of origin. People who were raised in a metropolitan area will think differently than those raised in a rural community. People from different states will have slightly different values which may impact the way you minister to them.

HOW TO MEASURE MINISTRY PERCEPTION IN YOUR CHURCH

As you prepare a vision statement for your church, you will want to collect data to determine how those currently involved in your church perceive your church. Use the following guidelines to develop and use an instrument to measure the ministry perception in your church.

• Determine which aspects of your church's ministry you wish to evaluate. Use the following list as a guide for identifying various ministry areas.

- Worship
- Evangelism
- Fellowship
- Discipleship
- Training/Equipping
- Children's Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Administration
- Planning
- Communication
- Social Services
- Prayer

• Prepare a questionnaire listing several statements describing aspects of each ministry area. Leave a place for people to rate each statement on the following scale of one to five.

1. I strongly disagree
2. I disagree
3. Sometimes/Occasionally
4. I agree
5. I strongly agree

- Include questions to identify groups of people in the church without asking them to give their names. Use the following list to determine what information you want to collect to give you insight for interpreting the data you collect.

- Age Range (12-18; 19-24; 25-40; 41-55; 56+)
- Sex (male; female)
- Educational Background (primary; secondary; vocational; college; graduate school)
- How many years have you been a Christian?
- How many years have you attended this church?
- How often do you attend church services?
- How many hours per week are you involved in church-related ministries?
- What percent of your income do you give to this church?

- You may wish to include one or two open-ended questions designed to encourage people to communicate concerns that might otherwise be overlooked. The following are examples of open-ended questions you might include.

1. The one thing I really like about our church is...
2. I would really like to see us do something about...

- Test your survey by asking the pastoral staff, members of the lay leadership team and Vision Task Force to complete it. Keep these completed surveys to compare with others later to determine the different ministry perceptions of church leaders and the congregational body.

- Make arrangements to conduct a survey to determine how people in your church perceive the quality and character of your ministry. There are four ways of conducting this survey. They are listed in order of preference based on the quality of data obtained through each survey.

1. *Sunday Morning Survey*. Take time during the morning service to have everyone present complete the survey. Several steps could be taken to give you the best results. (1) Announce plans to conduct the survey for three weeks prior to the survey Sunday. (2) Conduct the survey on the first Sunday of a month. Most churches have a slightly higher attendance that Sunday. (3) Introduce the survey as a means developed to help church leaders hear the concerns of the people and include everyone in the process of developing a vision statement. (4) Incorporate the completion of the survey into the service itself. Have ushers distribute as it is introduced. Walk people through the survey having them complete it as someone reads it to the group. Be sure to have pens or pencils on hand so everyone can participate. Then collect the surveys immediately to insure they are all

returned. (5) Be careful about suggesting or implying “right” answers as you walk people through the survey. You want to measure their perception rather than their ability to parrot back what you want to hear.

2. Telephone Survey. Have members of the Vision Task Force call each family on the church phone list and conduct the survey by phone. Be sure to note who answers the survey questions and understand husbands and wives do not always share similar perceptions of the church.

3. Direct Mail Survey. Send a copy of the survey to every home asking them to bring their completed survey with them Sunday. You may wish to call people Saturday to remind them to put the completed survey in their Bible so they don't forget it Sunday morning.

4. Random Sampling. Have members of the Vision Task Force interview people after a morning service. Ask people the survey questions and complete the form as you talk with them.

- Summarize the data collected to determine how the people of the church perceive the ministry. In addition to summarizing the results for the whole church, compare how different groups answered the questions. Use the following questions as a guide to find unique ministry perceptions in your church.

1. Is there a significant difference in ministry perception between church staff, lay leaders, and the congregational body?

2. Is there a significant difference in ministry perception between the men and women of the church?

3. Is there a significant difference in ministry perception between various age groups in the church?

4. Is there an apparent relationship between one's giving rate and ministry perception?

5. Is there a relationship between the length of time one has been saved or involved in the church and their perception of the ministry?

6. Is there a difference in ministry perception among people of various educational backgrounds?

7. Is there an apparent relationship between the level of involvement people have in the church and their ministry perception?

- What does all this data tell you about the way people in your church view the ministry of your church? What are the areas of perceived strength? What are the areas in which there is room for growth? Are there significant concerns in your church which need to be addressed? Could you describe the general self-perception of your church in a single statement or paragraph?

- Write a one to two-page summary of this data to be included in the Vision Task Force Report.

HOW TO MEASURE MINISTRY PERCEPTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

In addition to measuring the self perception of your church, you will want to know what people in your community think about your church. The way people in the community perceive your church will impact the way they respond when invited to a church function. If a negative reputation exists in town, steps need to be taken to change that reputation before significant evangelistic success will be realized. Use the following guidelines to develop and use an instrument to measure the ministry perception in your community.

- Use the Community Survey that invites a person to comment his or her perception of the church and what he or she thinks the church should be.
- Field test the survey. Approach about a dozen homes in different parts of the target community and survey the residents. Explain you are field testing a survey to be used later across the community. When the survey is completed, ask if any questions were unclear or difficult to understand. As you examine the results of this field test, determine if you are collecting the data you want to collect using the survey as is. Make any necessary revisions before conducting the larger survey.
- Determine the size of the survey group. While contacting every household in your community will give you the best results, you may not have enough time or workers to conduct a survey of that size. Results may be just as accurate taking a random survey of two or three households per block (i.e., every ninth house on the even number side of the street).
- Enlist people to help you conduct the survey. Normally you will be able to survey ten to twelve people an hour. Determine how many surveyors you will need, to talk to the number of people you want to see. Enlist workers to give you two hours per census for three days. This means each surveyor will make contact with at least 60 people.
- Print ten percent more surveys than you plan to use. You will want each surveyor to have a few extra forms with them as they talk to people. This will enable them to contact more people in the event they complete their assignments early.
- Train the surveyors on how to conduct a survey. They should introduce themselves as conducting a survey of the community for your church (use your church name), and ask permission to ask a few questions. If the surveyors are cordial in their approach, most people will be receptive to answering the questions.
- Be sure surveyors understand the nature of this exercise is to collect objective data about the community's perception of your church. Do not use people who will seek to defend their church when it is criticized or use the survey only as a means to begin an evangelistic conversation.

- Be certain surveyors understand they are likely to receive a hostile reaction from a certain percentage of those they contact. If they meet someone who wants to monopolize their time with critical accusations, have them complete the survey quickly and excuse themselves.

- Instruct surveyors to be sensitive to those who demonstrate a sincere interest in the church. Offer to have someone contact the person to answer any questions he or she may have about the church. If interest is expressed, be certain to get a name and phone number.

- Ask surveyors to always conclude their survey with an expression of thanks to the person completing the survey for their assistance to the church.

- Assign surveyors to specific blocks or neighborhoods within the target community. Also, if surveyors are working at different times (i.e., mornings, afternoons, evenings), be certain some surveys are done at different times in each neighborhood.

- Collect the data on a summary sheet of responses to the questions. You are looking for three things in this data.

1. What is the community saying? List all the answers given to each question.

2. How strongly are they saying it? Notice answers which are repeated several times.

3. Who is saying what? Check your data to see if certain answers are more common in certain neighborhoods. Compare that information with the data collected in your demographic survey of the community. Certain needs may be felt more strongly in some parts of your community or by different groups.

- Based on your findings, how do people in your community perceive your church. Remember, it is more helpful to have accurate information than to avoid embarrassment as you prepare a vision statement and develop an outreach strategy to reach people for Christ.

- Compare your community's perception of your church with your church's self perception. What common themes are emphasized? Where do the results differ significantly? What factors may explain these differences? Before excusing these differences, read Revelation 3:17-18. Is God trying to say something to His church?

- Compare the results of this survey with the demographic study of your church. What side-door ministries does your church now offer that could serve as an effective bridge between your church and your community?

- Based on the results of this survey, what kind of new ministries are potentially most effective in bridging your church to your community?

- Write the results of this survey in a one to two-page summary to be included in the Vision Task Force report.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Name of person surveyed_____

Address of person surveyed_____

Surveyor_____

1. Have you ever heard of (Your Church Name)? ___YES ___NO

2. In five words or less, how would you describe (Your Church Name)?

3. If you were looking for a church home in our community, what sort of things would you want most in the church?_____

4. Why do you think some people in our community choose not to attend church services?_____

5. What kind of services could a church offer that would be most beneficial to you and your family?_____

6. What kind of services do you think churches should offer to the community?

7. How interested would you be in a life-oriented Bible study with other adults in the community?

___Very Interested ___Somewhat Interested ___Not Interested

8. If you could tell the pastor of (Your Church Name) one thing, what would it be?

VISION DAY PLANNING CALENDAR

Weeks 1-7

Month	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Make a motion that a Vision Task Force be formed. <i>Note:</i> Task Force members should be contacted and ready to begin by this time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your worship leader.	<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct the first Vision Task Force meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/> Take materials to printer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SS Teachers contact members 		
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce the Vision Task Force members and formally commission them with a dedicatory prayer.		<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct the second Vision Task Force meeting.				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Explain the process by which the church will study vision. <input type="checkbox"/> Have a special prayer for Vision Day. <input type="checkbox"/> Distribute Teacher's Worktext.		<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct the third Vision Task Force meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> Send a letter inviting everyone to the <i>Vision Day</i> Workshop.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pick up materials from printer.			
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Teach Lesson #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Begin using <i>Vision Day</i> bulletins. <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce new vision song. <input type="checkbox"/> Preach sermon #1.		<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct fourth Vision Task Force meeting.				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Teach Lesson #2. <input type="checkbox"/> Have task force member present a brief summary report. <input type="checkbox"/> Preach Sermon #2.		<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct fifth Vision Task Force meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/> Send each task force member a copy of preliminary vision statement. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare a master of Vision Task Force Report.			
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Teach Lesson #3. <input type="checkbox"/> Have task force member present a brief summary report. <input type="checkbox"/> Preach Sermon #3.	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact <i>Vision Day</i> Workshop committee. <input type="checkbox"/> Contact <i>Vision Day</i> meal committee.	<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct sixth Vision Task Force meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> Send out schedule change reminder.				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Teach Lesson #4. <input type="checkbox"/> Preach Sermon #4. <input type="checkbox"/> Pass out <i>Vision Day</i> schedule. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct <i>Vision Day</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Write a personal letter to each member of the Vision Task Force. <input type="checkbox"/> Send a thank-you letter to everyone involved in <i>Vision Day</i> Workshop.					

About the Teaching Helps

This section includes an article entitled “Preaching to Motivate Your People to Dream,” an article entitled “How to Get Vision,” sermon outlines, workshop outlines, and a teacher’s worktext for Sunday School to assist you in preparing and teaching your church about vision.

The first article can be used as reference material. It provides timely insight on how to use the pulpit as a motivating tool. The second article is also for reference and can be used as an outline for your precampaign sermon.

The sermon outlines provide you with four weeks of sermon ideas. You can use the outlines as they are or modify them to meet your own congregation’s needs.

The workshop outlines or worksheets are to be distributed to everyone who attends the workshop. The answer key is also provided for your convenience.

The teacher’s worktext is to be used for Sunday School classes. You may copy it on your church copy machine.

PREACHING TO MOTIVATE YOUR PEOPLE TO DREAM

Every church needs three statements. First, it needs a vision statement to communicate the direction in which the church is moving. Second, it needs a ministry statement which outlines the means by which the church intends to pursue its vision. Third, it needs a doctrinal statement rooted in biblical theology which provides stability for a changing ministry.

As important as these statements are, statements alone will not guarantee progress in ministry. A declining church worked through a process of defining a vision statement for their church. The statement was approved by the church and a decision was made to give a copy of the church vision statement to every new member. But there were no new members to give the statement to. They had written a statement without buying into the vision. Only a few people in the church had learned how to dream and they eventually left. When given the opportunity to make changes to achieve the vision described in the vision statement, the church resisted changing and continued its decline.

The writer of the Proverbs noted, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). Some newer translations use the word “revelation” in the place of “vision.” Both translations emphasize an aspect of truth. In the context of *Vision Day*, the word “vision” refers to the channel by which God’s purpose for your church is communicated. The word “revelation” refers to the content of that vision, i.e. the vision statement itself. A church needs a vision statement to express its goals, objectives, aims and desired outcome. A *Vision Day* helps people dream dreams to motivate them to pursue that course of action.

Four steps are involved in the process of motivating your people to dream great dreams. First, you must explain the substance of your vision statement. Second, you must help people visualize the vision for themselves. Third, you should use music to reinforce their thinking and feeling. Finally, you must preach on vision and challenge your people to apply what they are

learning about dreaming great dreams. Each of these four steps are built into the planning suggestions for your *Vision Day*.

Explaining the Vision Statement

God's particular vision for your church is based on His character and the revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. A vision statement which proposes a future for the church that is inconsistent with the Scriptures has failed to define God's vision. In contrast, a vision statement which reflects God's vision for the church is a simple expression of one of more biblical principles.

When you have drafted your vision statement, prepare a sermon using the statement as your text. The purpose of this sermon is to explain the intended direction of the church to visitors or new members. This is a sermon you will use often, so take time to prepare well. It will be used in at least three contexts. First, you will use the outline to explain the vision statement during the Vision Day Workshop. Second, this sermon will become a part of your new member orientation as your church continues growing. Third, you will use this outline as a basis for your annual state of the church message reporting on the past and projecting goals for the future.

Painting a Picture of God's Vision

The second step in motivating people to dream is to use a symbol or picture that illustrates the vision. There is an aspect to every vision which cannot be taught, it must be caught. Just as the golden arches have come to mean more than a letter "M," so a church logo, symbol or picture can communicate aspects of your vision which cannot be explained.

In his book *Developing the Leader Within You*, John Maxwell describes communicating vision using aspects of a landscape painting. This painting is composed of parts which correspond to aspects of vision. First, it has a horizon. Every individual will decide how high he or she will go. Then it has a sun which represents warmth and hope. Light brings out optimism in people. Mountains are the third part of this vision. Every vision has barriers, problems, and hindrances which must be overcome. This picture also includes birds which remind us of our ability to soar above the problems. Fifth, the picture has flowers reminding us of the joy factor associated with God's vision for our life and ministry.

In the midst of this picture is a path because people need direction. They need a place to begin and a path to follow. Finally, this picture includes people. Maxwell writes, "Never paint a vision without putting yourself in the picture. People need a model to follow." But if you look closely, the people in this picture are carrying pictures of those close to them. The men in the picture are holding family photos which normally sit on their desks. The women in the picture are holding the school pictures of their children which are normally held to the door of the refrigerator with a magnet.

This picture is illustrated on the bulletin cover you will use during this campaign. Practice describing the picture to others, using specific details relating to your church and vision. Put the art on the cover of the task force report and use the picture to describe the vision to your lay leadership team. Share it with your Sunday School workers or Bible study group leaders. Refer to it in passing from the pulpit throughout the campaign. Describe the picture again during

the workshop. When the campaign is over, use the bulletin covers occasionally to remind your people of the vision.

A New Song for a New Vision

In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself in a variety of ways to many people. The nature of this revelation was progressive in that each new vision of God revealed a little more about His nature and attributes. And with each new vision, God gave His people a new song to sing to celebrate who He was and what He was doing for His people.

As you work through a process of discovering God's vision for your church and communicating it to His people, ask God to give you a new song for your new vision. Like the painting, a good vision song will communicate aspects of the vision which can't be explained. Also, research suggests that a message put to music is remembered faster and longer than a message without music. You may be surprised how many of your church members can still recite the words of Beatles songs they heard in the sixties and seventies. Unfortunately, some of them are unable to recall the outline in last Sunday's sermon.

There are at least two ways you can get a new vision song. First, there may be a song or chorus already sung in your church which takes on a new life and meaning when sung in the context of your vision. Second, you may have someone in your church write a song or chorus based on the vision statement. You will want to give this assignment to your worship leader as soon as the vision statement has been written.

In choosing a vision statement, certain things should be remembered. First, the melody of the song should be simple and reflective of the musical tastes of the church. You want this to be a song people will want to sing throughout the week as the melody comes to mind. Second, the words of the song should emphasize a theme consistent with the new direction implied or stated in your vision statement.

Sermon Article

HOW TO GET VISION

(A sermon to prepare the church to see and own a vision of its future)

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Prov. 29:18).

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:1-4).

There are several steps to acquire vision that are given in these verses. These steps lay the foundation for a vision that makes a church successful in ministry and growth. These steps may

be taken to get a vision for ministry, for a successful family, or a vision for secular work. This may be a vision for a Sunday School class or any ministry that God has put upon your heart.

1. *Vision is absolutely essential.* The writer of Proverbs warns us that “where there is no vision,” there is disaster ahead. What happens? “The people perish.” This is another way of saying the church fails or the class is ineffective.

When a church is not winning souls, it is because of a lack of vision. If people are not serving, tithing, or growing in Christ, it is lack of vision.

Vision gets a leader up in the morning to pray and sacrifice for the work of God. Vision stretches our faith to trust God for greater things and vision motivates us to prayer and outreach.

Vision is more than objectives, aims, or living with a purpose. Vision adds passion and feeling to those things usually associated with goals. While our goals may be expressed in money, buildings, numbers or baptisms; vision is passion and feelings. Vision is something we must do, while a goal is something we should do. A vision drives us beyond purpose to complete sacrifice.

Our aim is what we intend to do, therefore an aim is internal. It gives us direction and focus. An aim is what the archer does with his bow and arrow. The objective is the target; it is where we aim. While some educators make aims and objectives the same, there is a difference. An objective is the desired outcome. The target has a center and all arrows can be measured in relationship to the objective, i.e. the center of the target.

But vision includes both aim and objective. It includes the archer’s values and temperament. A vision is a mental picture of hitting the center of the target, so vision includes how it will happen, i.e. the practice, the tools, and methods of holding the bow. Vision includes the archer’s response after the arrow hits the center of the target. Vision includes attitude, method, strategy, and follow-up.

Vision is essential for every church. Without vision, the church just “maintains” and a church that just “holds on” will eventually die.

There must be a vision of getting people saved, or no one will get saved. There must be a vision of people growing in the Word. There must be a vision of supporting missionaries or church members won’t tithe, or sacrifice their money.

Vision is essential for a healthy church and without it, the people will die.

2. *Vision extends to more than just full-time Christian workers.* The writer of Proverbs says that “people perish.” He doesn’t talk about the death of ministry, the church, or those in full-time work. Vision influences people ... all people. Every individual must have a vision and every individual must buy into the church’s vision.

VISION FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

- a. A vision of his relationship and walk with God
- b. A vision of what God can do through his family
- c. A vision of his personal ministry for God
- d. A vision of how God can use him at work

The individual must also buy into the vision of the church. The church vision must become the passion of each individual in the church, and the effectiveness of the whole depends upon how deeply each member buys into the church's vision.

The first law of leadership is called the Law of Vision or Dreams. "When people buy into a leader's vision/dream, they buy into his leadership."

Therefore, a vision must go beyond the leader and be communicated to the people. Every individual in the church has the right to three aspects of vision. They have a right to see and understand the pastor's vision, to partake in the vision, and to own the vision.

SEE A VISION

SHARE A VISION

OWN A VISION

3. *Vision comes form obedience to the Word of God.* The writer of Proverbs notes the Scripture is the source of vision: "He that keepeth the law." This is antithetical poetry meaning the thoughts are related by stating an opposite premise. Some with no vision perish, but the opposite is true. "He that keepeth the law" grows in vision.

When I was twenty-eight years old, I became a college president, taking over the leadership of the school from Rev. Wesley Affleck, who had been president for twenty-nine years. Rev. Affleck was a wise man who immediately perceived that I had aggressiveness with my youth. One day he smiled and told me, "Blessed is the unsatisfied - when he has a goal." Rev. Affleck was complimenting me because my goal was to build Winnipeg Bible College into one of the leaders in the Dominion of Canada. But Rev. Affleck also knew I had a biblical goal for the college, i.e. to train young people for ministry. The college had trained many to go to the mission field and I was committed to that goal.

A great vision flows out of the Word of God. How does this vision flow to us? First, we must attend church where we can listen to the Word of God. Second, we must give ourselves to the reading of the Word of God. Third, we must study the Word of God to know what it means and how it applies to us. Fourth, we must memorize the Word of God, hiding its truths in our hearts. Fifth, we must meditate upon the Word of God so that its truth becomes a part of our value system and outlook on life.

When we assimilate the Word of God, it affects our view of life; hence, it affects our vision. Those who don't know the Bible can't have a biblical vision. Those who know it but are not committed to do it, can't have a biblical vision.

4. *Vision diminishes if it is not obeyed.* The writer of Proverbs said, "Where there is no vision the people perish; but he that keepeth the law . . ." (Prov. 29:18). This verse tells us that we must obey the Bible in order to preserve our vision. If you don't obey the vision that God has given to you, it begins to wane in clearness and gets more "fuzzy" each day. This means that your excitement for doing God's will begins to wane. You are out "out of gear" and every time you step on the accelerator, the motor only roars. You don't go anywhere and there is no power.

If you don't obey the vision you have, you will never have a larger vision. As a matter of fact, you will lose the vision God has given you. How do we obey the vision? First, obeying the vision involves stepping out on faith - whether or not we understand, have the money, or even see the whole plan. Faith is obedience to the Word of God. Then we must yield our plans to Him. When we see the vision, we must personally incorporate that vision, and give up any selfish view we have for our own lives. Finally, grow the vision by trusting God to give us more. Just as the automobile's lights on a dark evening illuminate the road for a hundred yards, so we must walk in the light that we have. It is impossible for an automobile to see the next ten miles; it can only see a hundred yards at a time. God does not give us a vision of our total life, and where all the money will come from to do the vision. He expects obedience. "He that keepeth the law, happy is he."

5. *Vision comes to the spiritually alert.* Habakkuk said, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me" (Hab. 2:1). Habakkuk indicates a person must want a vision in order to get the vision that is promised at the appointed time.

How do you get the vision? You must be alert to your present circumstances. This means if you want a vision of a great family, you must be working at building the family in your present circumstances. To be spiritually alert, you must be looking for opportunities to carry out the vision, and praying daily for the completion of the vision.

To be alert, the church must be waiting on God for marching orders, just as troops waiting for orders from the commander, they are ready for battle. But to be alert and ready, notice what the troops have done. They have trained, exercised, and practiced. They have their weapons and have made a commitment to fight.

For a church to get a vision from God, it must be practicing the presence of God, be trained in service, and be equipped with the weapons of spiritual warfare.

God will not give a vision to a church that doesn't want it. God will not give a vision to a group of people that do not seek it. A vision is not dropped from heaven in a sheet, nor is it communicated like lightning from heaven. To get a vision, a leader must be leading the people to "know Christ and make Him known." The people must eagerly seek God's direction and blessing.

6. *Vision obeyed leads to a greater vision.* Habakkuk said, “I will ... set me upon the tower and will watch” (Hab. 2:1). When someone knows his designated time of watch and takes his place on the tower, he is obeying the commandments as he knows them. When a Christian is obeying the light that he has, he is preparing himself for more light - a clearer vision.

Habakkuk obeyed the vision or burden originally given to him (Hab. 1:1). He waited and “the Lord answered” (Hab. 2:2). The additional vision came to Habakkuk, “write the vision and make it plain” (Hab. 2:2). This implies the vision was not clear or had not been plainly understood.

What Habakkuk wrote was chapter two, or the second part of the vision. Because he was alert and had been waiting for a clearer vision, God answered his prayers and made the vision easier to see and easier to understand.

7. *Vision must become a person.* This means the vision is more than just a written paragraph on paper. A vision statement printed in the church bulletin is only a first step. The vision must live in the leader before it will live in the lives of the people. The leader must want the vision of ministry. Doing ministry before the people will help them “catch” their own vision of ministry.

Notice how Habakkuk’s vision changed from “it” to a person, “he.” The command reads, “write the vision and make it (notice of a written statement) plain upon tables, that he (vision translated into a person) may run that readeth” (Hab. 2:2, author’s translation). The written vision statement must become the life of the leader and drive the leader to action.

When a person wants a greater vision, he must be operating on green, not looking for the red lights of this life. He doesn’t sit on the stool of “do nothing” and wait for God to give him a vision. He has made himself available and is moving toward a goal. The prophet wrote, “I will ... watch to see what He will say to me.”

God doesn’t speak to those who are passive. God is looking for people who live in the active tense. He speaks to those who are moving. Just as the sailing vessel heading into the wind can be turned more easily than those dead in the water, so God directs His active people with greater ease.

Eliazar, the eldest servant of Abraham, was sent to find a wife for Isaac. When he arrived in Mesopotamia, he prayed, “O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day” (Gen. 24:12). Because he was actively seeking the “perfect” young lady, he ran across Rebekah. Later, he noted, “I being in the way, the Lord led me” (Gen. 24:27). God leads those who actively seek His will. God gives a vision for ministry to those who are doing His ministry.

8. *Vision must be written for clarity of understanding and communication.* Some people have a vision, but cannot tell their spouse, their congregation - they cannot tell anyone. You have trouble if you have a vision from God that cannot be clearly communicated. Therefore, God told Habakkuk, “Write the vision, and make it plain.”

When we write a vision, it moves from subjective mysticism to objective reality. A vision that says we must love God more, have better children or be a better church is not a clear vision. These are just urges or desires. By writing the vision, we have a clear idea of what we want to accomplish for God.

A vision is what you want to do for God. When you put dates, numbers, and places to your vision, it becomes a goal. Then we can write an exact number down, indicate a certain place, and even put a date to our vision. We make it “plain upon tables.”

When you write a message, it becomes a part of you. Students at school take notes, so that what the teacher is saying becomes a part of their thinking. I heard it said once that a message is not yours until you can write it down. In the same way, a vision is not yours until you can write it down.

You must see the vision before it will happen. Then, you must write the vision before it will be followed. You cannot achieve what you cannot conceive.

Vision must be acted upon. First, you must act upon your vision. Then others must act on your vision. Those who refuse to act on vision are just “dreamers.” They really have not possessed the vision, nor has the vision possessed them.

The vision becomes yours when you see the vision and run with it. You must put shoe leather to your thinking.

9. *Vision comes to those with patience.* God does not always jump when we ask for something. Sometimes, God waits for us to get in the right spiritual condition before he answers. Sometimes, God waits to see if we really mean business.

A vision doesn't always drop on us “out of the blue.” Some have prayed for years before they see the total vision. A young boy in the first few years of Bible college says yes to the vision of full-time service. Then in his senior year, God gives him a further vision of youth work and he follows. As he works in his first youth pastorate, God gives him evangelistic success. He follows the vision into youth evangelism. Finally, he localizes in college evangelism because that is the vision God has made clear. The total vision came slowly.

Note three things related to time in Habakkuk's vision. First, his vision was for the future, “for an appointed time” (Hab. 2:3). Second, he was told, “though it tarry, wait for it” (Hab. 2:3). Third, “it will surely come” (Hab. 2:3).

The word “patience” means “to remain under.” The leader must remain under the Word of God and follow the disciplines of Christianity to clearly see the vision God has for him and the work.

10. *Vision will direct your energies, resources, and dreams to the future.* “For the vision is yet for an appointed time.” Every one of us must live in the future. So we prepare for the future and dream of how life will be better. Sometimes we dread the future because we know that judgment or hard times are coming. But everyone wants life to be better; therefore they yearn for an appointed time when they will be victorious and realize their dreams.

Even those outside Christ want something better. The world sings of “somewhere over the rainbow.” Disney promises, “when you wish upon a star ... dreams come true.” These songs are future oriented. They point to a better tomorrow!

History lessons have never built skyscrapers, attracted large crowds, or motivated people to sacrifice. Yesterday ended last night. People on the move are future-oriented. The challenge of the future will move us to build churches and make sacrifices for our children.

God told Habakkuk, “But at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” If we have a great vision and it is from God, we must work for it. If God has given us the vision and we work diligently, trust Him in faith, commit the project to prayer, and follow biblical principles, the vision will become a reality.

11. *Some visions fail to materialize.* Some people fail to carry out their vision. There are at least two broad reasons why people with vision experience apparent failure. The first reason relates to the failure of people to carry out the vision. Their vision is not realized because of a lack of prayer or faith, they use wrong principles, or they are lazy and refuse to sacrifice to accomplish the vision. The second reason relates to timing. Some people with vision experience apparent failure which gives birth to a greater vision. As a young man, Oswald Smith had a vision of reaching people in other lands with the gospel, but he was rejected as a candidate by three different mission boards. But his vision for world evangelism grew and was realized as he established the People’s Church in Toronto which has invested millions of dollars in world evangelism. A larger vision was realized as he conducted evangelistic crusades around the world and saw his books translated into many languages.

Most people fail because they don’t have a vision. They don’t pray because there is no reason to pray. They don’t step out on faith because they lack a motivating vision. They lock into the comfort zone in their ministry because there is no vision to challenge them into new areas of service. There is no compelling vision to cause them to sacrifice.

12. *Vision is supernatural.* If you are dreaming a great vision from God, you are preparing to live in the supernatural life. God wants His people to live supernaturally. What do we mean by “living supernaturally?” The Holy Spirit works supernaturally through you to accomplish His vision. If God has given you a vision, you must go after it and let the Holy Spirit lead you to get it.

The result of vision is living by faith. “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4). To live by faith is to live by another’s faith. It is supernatural living as you live by “His faith.” When God gives us His faith, He expects us to live supernaturally and fulfill the vision.

Workshop Outlines

Sermon One *A Vision of God*

Scripture

Revelation 1:9-20

Sermon Outline

- I. What will a vision of God do for you?
 - A. It will give you a deeper insight into who God is. Each aspect of the description of Jesus in this chapter proved to be exactly what one of the churches needed.
 - B. It will give you a direction in your ministry. When John saw Jesus, he was immediately commissioned to write a book (Rev. 1:11, 19).
 - C. It will lead to a keener awareness of what God is doing around you. The visions in the Revelation gave John insight into the hand of God working in His world.
 - D. It will give you a strong desire to want to see the fulfillment of God's vision for your life.
- II. What does it take to get a fresh vision from God?
 - A. John was committed to learning and communicating the Word of God to others (Rev. 1:9).
 - B. He had a lifestyle consistent with the known and revealed will of God for his life (Rev. 1:9).

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Sermon Two *A Vision of Self*

Scripture

Isaiah 6:1-13

Sermon Outline

- I. What causes us to have a wrong vision of self?
 - A. We look at others (i.e., King Uzziah) rather than looking closely at our own life (Isa. 6:1).
 - B. We compare ourselves to others in our society rather than comparing ourselves to our Creator (Isa. 6:5).
 - C. We enter the temple but fail to enter into the worship of God (Isa. 6:2-3).
 - D. We have no vision of God and therefore can have no accurate vision of self (Isa. 6:3, 5).
- II. What will a correct vision of self do for you?
 - A. It will give you a more accurate appreciation of your own failings and shortcomings (Isa. 6:5).
 - B. It will provide opportunities to correct things that are wrong in your life (Isa. 6:7).
 - C. It will make you more sensitive to the leading of the Lord in your life (Isa. 6:8).

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D. It will make you more aware of the problems other people live with (Isa. 6:9-10).

E. It will make you more patient in working with people over the long haul (Isa. 6:11-12).

F. It will sustain hope of eventual returns on your investment in others (Isa. 6:13).

III. How can you get an accurate vision of self?

A. Get a fresh vision of God in all His majestic glory (Isa. 6:1, 5).

B. Deal quickly with sin God points out in your life (Isa. 6:5-7).

C. Be responsive to the Lord's leading in your life (Isa. 6:8).

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C. He had yielded himself to God and was under the control of the Spirit of God (Rev. 1:10).

D. He responded when he heard the voice and proved to be willing to obey God when He spoke (Rev. 1:11, 19).

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Sermon Three
A Vision for Direction

Scripture

Acts 16:6-10

Sermon Outline

- I. Why do we need God's vision for direction?
 - A. God's vision for our life and ministry is bigger than our vision for our life and ministry (Acts 15:36, Paul's vision; Acts 16:9, God's vision).
 - B. Others are being influenced and impacted by the decisions we make (cf. Silas, Timothy, Luke).
 - C. Serving God without a clear sense of direction will only lead to frustration over closed doors (Acts 16:6-7).
 - D. A lack of vision may cause us to quit prematurely. Troas, a coastal city may have been on the way home to Antioch.
- II. How can we gain direction in ministry?
 - A. Look for people in need who are willing to be helped (man of Macedonia).
 - B. Begin moving in the most logical direction and let God direct your steps (Acts 16:10; cf. Prov. 16:9).
 - C. Remember what God has gifted and called you to do. For Paul, it was preaching the Gospel to Gentiles (Acts 16:10).

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Sermon Four
A Vision for Ministry

Scripture

John 4:34-42

Sermon Outline

- I. How did Jesus' vision for ministry impact Him?
 - A. He drew His strength from His vision (John 4:34).
 - B. It gave Him insight into the abundance and ripeness of the harvest (John 4:35).
 - C. It was the source of the joy factor in His life (John 4:36).
 - D. It helped Him see His role in the larger scheme of things (John 4:37).
 - E. It enabled Him to enlist others in significant ministry opportunities (John 4:38).
- II. What could a ministry vision accomplish for us?
 - A. It keeps our focus on Christ; who He is and what He does (John 4:29, 39).
 - B. It keeps us involved in the lives of people (John 4:39).
 - C. It extends the life of our ministry, opening new opportunities to impact lives (John 4:40).

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- D. It results in growth and causes us to grow with the growing vision (John 4:41).
- E. It will add new dimensions to our Christian experience and give us new insights into spiritual truth (John 4:42).

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III. What happens when we serve God as He directs?

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- A. Others will believe in our ministry and follow (Luke joined Paul's team at this point).
- B. God opens doors for us that would not be opened otherwise (Acts 16:14).
- C. God's work done in God's way at His direction and according to His timing will not lack God's supply (Acts 16:15).
- D. There will be obstacles to overcome (Acts 16:16-26).
- E. God will give the increase and produce fruit (1 Cor. 3:7). The churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth and Ephesus were started on the second missionary journey after the Macedonian call.



Toward a Vision Statement

by Emer Towns

A. What is Vision?

There must be a leader(s) to motivate and re-vitalize a Sunday School. The leader's best instrument to revitalize Sunday School is the tool of Vision. The First Law of Leadership states, "When people buy into a leader's vision/dream, they buy into his/her leadership."

1. Vision is a bridge to walk from _____.
2. Vision is the eye of faith to see the invisible and a commitment to make it happen, then sharing it with others.

See a Vision
Own a Vision
Share a Vision

3. Vision is painting a portrait of what does not yet exist, so people can make things happen to give existence to the vision.
4. "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." - George Barna
Therefore vision includes:
Why? _____
What? _____
Source? _____
Basis? _____
5. What is not a Vision?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

B. Getting Ready for Vision

1. Vision produces:
Healthy _____
Growing _____
Successful _____
The _____
2. People with great vision:

3. What happens to the church with no vision?
_____no burden to find lost sheep.
_____no desire to reach unchurched FRANS.
_____no strategy to apply the Great Commission.
_____low level of commitment to attendance.
_____no reason to learn and apply the lesson.
4. What Vision Gives to Your Church:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

When vision does not give happiness:
Unrealistic Dreams
Wrongly Conceived Dreams
Dreams Pushed On To Us
Cross Purposes
 - e. _____
 - f. _____

5. How to Change a Group:

1. _____

6. _____ 2. _____

SUCCESS

5. _____ 3. _____

4. _____

**When Thinking Changes -
Belief Changes**

When people do something without changing the way they think, they will revert or rebel.

**When Belief Changes -
Expectations Change**

Belief is a deep assurance that a thing is true, an inner conviction motivates them to action.

**When Expectations Change -
Aims Change**

A life-changing vision is based on the people's assurance that it can happen.

**When Aims Change -
Strategy Changes**

When people are committed to accomplishing an aim, they will apply a strategy they believe in.

**When Strategy Changes -
Methods Change**

People will work to apply a method when they know their strategy will work.

**When Methods Are Applied -
SUCCESS!**

6. How Does Vision Work?

a. Inspiring _____

b. Exciting _____

c. Proven _____

d. Workable _____

e. A pastor who _____

f. People who _____

g. A Sunday School plan that _____

7. How To Paint Your Vision Canvas:
- By John Maxwell

a. _____. Need more sky than earth.

b. _____. include your problems in barriers.

c. _____. Every vision is going somewhere.

d. _____. Everyone wants some enjoyment.

e. _____. There must be room for our spirits to soar.

f. _____. A Biblical vision focused on people.

g. _____. God works through people to accomplish His purpose.

8. Vision Statement

Turning Nominal Believers Into Dedicated Disciples:

LOOK WHAT GOD HAS DONE!

What Will Vision Day Do for Our Church?

1. It puts everyone on the _____.
2. It helps us _____ for next year.
3. It shows us where we _____.
4. It shows us where we _____.
5. It helps us talk about future _____.
6. It reminds us of _____.

A Vision of What Our Church Could Be.

Acts 2:40-47 describes the heart of the first church, the Church of Jerusalem. This church was a worshipping body of maturing believers experiencing the reality of God working in their lives; people who with joy and enthusiasm shared that reality with others in their personal sphere of influence. Understanding what God did in Jerusalem will give us insight to recognize what He has been doing in your church and community.

1. They were a worshipping _____.
2. They were composed of _____ believers.
3. They experienced the reality of _____.
4. They had both _____ and _____.
5. They reached others in their _____.

LOOK WHAT GOD CAN DO!

Our Vision Has Three Steps:

1. _____. Our church wants more than membership. It wants everyone to be a “follower” of Jesus Christ.
2. _____. While most see themselves as believers in God, our church wants everyone to _____ Christ in salvation and make Him _____ in their daily lives.
3. _____. Our church wants to direct every part of its life according to the principles of Jesus Christ.

The Three-Fold Foundation of Our Vision:

1. To see the _____ of Jesus Christ.
2. To feel _____ for people.
3. To be _____ by the potential of people.

What Our Vision Is Not:

1. We will not just focus on _____ but will emphasize influencing our FRANS.
2. We will not focus on just getting people to make an _____ for God, but on their becoming committed disciples.
3. We will not focus on making people _____, but will network them to Jesus Christ.
4. We will not focus on using _____ but will reach people for Christ through normal everyday relationships.

Four Steps of Our Ministry Statement:

1. Team _____.
2. Team _____.
3. Team _____.
4. Team _____.

A PEOPLE-REACHING, PEOPLE-BUILDING VISION

God's vision for your church involves reaching and building people. During this video segment, let's look at the nature of church growth and how we can reach and build people most effectively.

Understanding Church Growth

Three False Views of Church Growth

1. It's a _____ problem.
2. It's a _____ problem.
3. It's a _____ problem.

Four Factors in Sustained Church Growth

1. Churches stop growing when the _____.

Easy growth = _____ commitment from _____ people.

Sustained growth = _____ commitment from _____ people.

2. Churches stop growing when their greatest asset becomes their greatest liability.

Our greatest asset = _____.

A question for all church leaders:

Am I _____ or _____ people?

A question for all church members:

Am I _____ or _____ others?

3. Churches stop growing when they allow failure to become _____.

4. Churches stop growing when they function without a _____.

5. Churches stop growing when they function without a _____.

A SIX-STEP STRATEGY FOR GROWTH

STEP ONE: _____

Discovering receptive-responsive people!

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____

STEP TWO: _____

Using outreach events to reach people!

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____

STEP THREE: _____

Building Christian experience around worship!

STEP FOUR: _____

Building people through small group ministry!

My small group leader is _____

STEP FIVE: _____

Practicing biblical stewardship of time, talents, and treasures!

My spiritual gift is _____

I could use my gift in _____

My financial investment in the vision _____

STEP SIX: _____

Training leaders for effective ministry!

I need further training in _____

GOD'S VISION - MY VISION

STEP ONE: Have the _____ of _____.

1. Find a _____ for believing God will answer this prayer.

2. Be _____ rather than _____ in making your own request known.

3. Be certain you are _____ to God completely.

4. _____. Don't stop praying.

5. Live _____ with the known will of God.

STEP TWO: _____ what you know God will do.

1. Personalize the vision statement.

2. Set goals based on the vision.

3. Define your ministry in the vision context.

4. Tell someone what you are doing.

5. Pray together with others for the vision.

STEP THREE: Don't let _____ shake your confidence.

1. Make a _____ list of what God has done.

2. Study the _____ of God in Scripture.

3. What is likely to make me doubt God?

STEP FOUR: Be _____ to the Lord's leading.

1. What do I know God wants me to do?

2. What do I need to do to accomplish that?

WORKSHOP ANSWER KEY

LOOK WHAT GOD HAS DONE!

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. same page | 1. body |
| 2. prepare | 2. maturing |
| 3. have been | 3. God at work |
| 4. are going | 4. joy; enthusiasm |
| 5. goals | 5. sphere of influence |
| 6. our dependence upon God | |

LOOK WHAT GOD CAN DO!

1. Disciples
2. Nominal believers; know; known
3. Dedicated disciples

1. command
2. compassion
3. challenged

1. strangers
2. outward decision
3. feel guilty
4. abnormal methods

1. Ministry
2. Evangelism
3. Bonding
4. Leadership

A PEOPLE-REACHING. PEOPLE-BUILDING VISION

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1. location | 1. cost becomes too high; little; few; significant; many |
| 2. building | 2. people; using; building; encouraging; discouraging |
| 3. people | 3. final |
| | 4. ministry statement 5. vision statement |

A SIX-STEP STRATEGY FOR GROWTH

- Step One: Identify your personal sphere of influence
- Step Two: Network your friends to the church
- Step Three: Celebrate the Lord together
- Step Four: Grow together in the Word
- Step Five: Invest in ministry
- Step Six: Become all God meant for effective ministry

GOD'S VISION - MY VISION

Step One: Faith; God

Step Two: Express

- 1. biblical basis
- 2. steadfast; impulsive
- 3. yielded
- 4. Persevere
- 5. consistent

Step Three: doubt

Step Four: responsive

- 1. victory
- 2. faithfulness

GOD'S VISION - MY VISION

- 1. health
- 2. safety
- 3. relationships
- 4. open
- 5. wisdom
- 6. responsiveness

Seeing the Invisible

Learning to Dream from a Dreamer

***Vision Day
Teacher's Worktext***

Elmer Towns



Lesson One Outline

Dreaming Beyond Your Limitations

NOTES

I. What Is Vision?

Vision is a _____ of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants...based on an accurate understanding of _____ and _____ (Barna).

II. What Will Vision Do for You?

A. It will give you _____ in life.

Joseph had a vision of governing. In his family, Potiphar's household, the prison and Pharaoh's cabinet, Joseph consistently rose to a governing position.

B. It will introduce you to _____ in life.

Joseph faced three levels of opposition.
(a) Envy that turned to hatred
(b) Ridicule (Genesis 37:8, 10, 19)
(c) Active attempts to frustrate the dream (Genesis 37:20)

C. It will keep you _____ .

D. It will give you a _____ to pursue your dream.

III. How Do You Get God's Vision for Your Life?

A. Joseph was a man of _____ (Genesis 37:2).

B. Joseph had _____ from God (Genesis 41:38; Psalm 105:22).

C. Joseph was _____ to God (Genesis 39:9; 40:8; 45:5, 7-9; 50:19; 20; Psalm 105:22).

D. Joseph was _____ to investing in people (Genesis 45:3).

E. Joseph lived in _____ with God (Genesis 39:2).

Dreaming Beyond Your Limitations

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II. What Will Vision Do for You?

A. It will give you _____ in life.

Joseph had a vision of governing. In his family, Potiphar's household, the prison and Pharaoh's cabinet, Joseph consistently rose to a governing position.

B. It will introduce you to _____ in life.

Joseph faced three levels of opposition.
(a) Envy that turned to hatred
(b) Ridicule (Genesis 37:8, 10, 19)
(c) Active attempts to frustrate the dream (Genesis 37:20)

C. It will keep you _____.

D. It will give you a _____ to pursue your dream.

III. How Do You Get God's Vision for Your Life?

A. Joseph was a man of _____ (Genesis 37:2).

B. Joseph had _____ from God (Genesis 41:38; Psalm 105:22).

C. Joseph was _____ to God (Genesis 39:9; 40:8; 45:5, 7-9; 50:19; 20; Psalm 105:22).

D. Joseph was _____ to investing in people (Genesis 45:3).

E. Joseph lived in _____ with God (Genesis 39:2).

Dreaming Beyond Your Limitations

Life had been hard for Joseph. Years before his birth, his father married sisters who grew to hate each other. By the time he was born into this severely dysfunctional family, eleven others had preceded him. Ten of the eleven were brothers who lived to make his life miserable.

In a family like that, there were always problems and often big problems. A long-term dispute between his father and an uncle resulted in the family leaving the place that had been home for twenty years. Then about the time they were ready to settle down, his father had a mysterious meeting with another uncle, one Joseph had never met before. While everything seemed cordial, the family shifted direction, ending up in a place called Shechem.

Shechem didn't turn out to be such a great idea. Joseph's sister was sexually defiled by the son of a city official, creating an embarrassing situation for the family. When Jacob learned the boy was willing to marry Dinah, he agreed hoping to cover the shame. But a couple of Joseph's older brothers had another idea. The family honor had to be avenged. They worked out a scheme that resulted in the death of every man in the city. Once again, the family was on the move.

Trying to get along with his brothers was a constant struggle for Joseph. His father saw potential in him and made his views public. This only aggravated an already tense situation. As a very young boy, he no doubt drew some strength from his mother, but she died giving birth to his younger brother and now he was alone. He was number eleven of twelve sons in an age when birth order meant everything. Life was hard and the future offered no better options.

But Joseph had a dream! He dreamed of sheaves in the field and stars in the sky. The images were different but the essential message of His dreams remained the same. Some day, Joseph would govern. He saw himself as a ruler over his brothers, even his parents. His brothers saw Joseph's dreams as wishful thinking and assured him they would not recognize him as their leader. They intensified their anger toward him, but Joseph just kept on dreaming (Gen. 37:9).

What Is Vision?

Dreaming was not new in Joseph's family, but it had been a long time since anyone had

done it well. Three generations earlier, his great-grandfather dreamed of a new land and a new nation with a unique relationship to God. Abraham's dream had caused him to abandon the worship of the moon and begin worshipping the God who made the moon along with the rest of the universe. That dream helped Abraham leave the comforts of Ur to live in tents in Palestine. He was 100 years old before he saw his dream realized in the birth of Isaac. His was a dream his family would never forget.

Abraham's grandson, Joseph's father, also started out life as a dreamer, but that was shortlived. On occasion Joseph had heard his dad talk about that night at Bethel. There he had seen angels causing him to make a significant commitment of himself to God. But the occasional reference to the dream seemed inconsistent with most of what Joseph saw in his dad. It seemed there had been a lot more talk about breeding cattle and the injustice of Laban than angels or "the house of God" in his home. When the family finally left Haran for Palestine, Joseph remembered hearing his dad talk about another dream calling him to return to Bethel, but Joseph suspected the family's departure had more to do with the growing tension between his dad and uncle than a calling from God.

The dreams of Joseph and his ancestors were all different, yet each one had certain common characteristics. Their dreams were all future oriented. This family did not dream of the glory days of the past but rather the potential in their future. The cynic might suggest they did not have much of a past to glory in, but that was not exactly true. Some of their ancestors, men like Adam, Enoch, Noah and Seth would be remembered far beyond their lifetime. They dreamed of the future because the future promised even greater days were coming. Their dreams were reflective of their hope, or perhaps they drew hope from their dreams.

These dreams were also unique in that each dreamer proved to be chosen by God for some specific task. Years later, the Lord would tell all of His disciples, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16). But in the era of the patriarchs, God's choices were more limited. Only a few people were recognized as his

chosen servants, and those few all turned out to be dreamers.

Each of these dreams also had a common theme in subject matter. Without exception, these dreams described something new about God, providing significant insight into either who He was or what He was doing in their world. But the dream did not deal with God in isolation from the reality around them. In each case, the dreamer himself was drawn into the subject matter of his dreams. Most often, these dreams described some way in which God, through the dreamer, intended to alter circumstances and change the apparent course of history.

An analysis of these dreams provide a basis for defining dreams and visions today. In his book, *The Power of Vision*, George Barna describes vision as "a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants . . . based on an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances." Barna's definition not only describes vision in the context of church leaders building growing churches, it also describes the dreams of Abraham, Joseph and each of us seeking to pursue God's vision for our life.

What Will Vision Do for You?

Joseph's dreams changed his life in much the same way your dreams will change your life. Dreams give people a sense of direction in life. As a 17 year-old boy, Joseph dreamed of governing. Someday, others in his family would recognize his authority over them. He did not know how this would happen or even when it would happen, but he was certain His dream was from God and would be realized. Therefore, in every situation in which Joseph found himself thereafter, he grew into assuming administrative responsibility.

Children in Sunday School learn about Joseph's coat of many colors, but few understand the real significance of that coat. The Hebrew word used to describe this coat suggests it was a longer garment in contrast to the shorter robes worn by his brothers. The robe was probably made of white linen with a colorful trim. It was the sort of robe normally worn by those whose wealth afforded them the luxury of not needing to do manual labor. This robe was more than a symbol of affection from a father. It was also a promotion giving Joseph some degree of administrative authority over his brothers.

Later, the same thing happened to Joseph in Potiphar's home. Joseph had been purchased as a house servant but Potiphar soon discovered the bargain he had made. He continued to give his slave increased responsibilities, entrusting Joseph to make decisions concerning managing the household

and eventually all his business affairs. "So he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate" (Gen. 39:6).

Even in prison, Joseph's dream gave him direction. His ability to govern was quickly recognized and utilized by the prison warden. "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing" (Gen. 39:22). Ultimately, Joseph's dream found fulfillment as he served in Pharaoh's cabinet, but the same dream gave Joseph a sense of direction in many other contexts.

Dreams also present people with new challenges in life. Because dreams deal with changing the future, there are always obstacles to overcome before the dreams become reality. Businessmen dream of making profits, but they must first develop products, produce them, then market them effectively. Parents dream of raising their children to be young men and women of God, but children are immediately confronted with other influences in their lives which tend to draw them in other directions. A young pastor dreams of building a church, but there are people to reach, land to purchase, zoning bylaws to deal with and money to raise before the construction of that first building ever begins. Dreams, by their very nature, are always accompanied by new challenges.

But not all those challenges are tied to the dream alone. Those who refuse to dream will always oppose others around them who dare to dream. It happens to every dreamer as they begin pursuing their dream. Joseph faced three levels of opposition from members of his own family. First, was his brothers' envy that grew into hatred (Gen. 37:5, 11). Then they began expressing their attitude toward Joseph and his dreams in ridicule (Gen. 37:8, 10, 19). Ultimately, his bothers became active in their hostility with specific attempts to frustrate the dream (Gen. 37:20).

Perhaps the Surgeon General should issue a warning about dreaming. "Warning: Dreaming will tend to isolate you from nondreamers and are accompanied by significant challenges." Such a warning would not stop a real dreamer from dreaming, but it might prepare him or her for the opposition he or she is likely to face in pursuing the dream.

The third thing dreams do for people is keep them future focused. People who don't dream tend to look back on the past. That would have been as fatal to Joseph as it is for anyone else consumed with the past. Had Joseph chosen to focus on the past abuses he experienced in his home, in the service of Potiphar, and in prison, he would have become so full of bitterness he would have

been useless in the service of God. His future orientation was one of the ways he was able to overcome the pain associated with his past and avoid bitterness. His insight into God's vision for his life helped him see God working everything to His ultimate goal (Rom. 8:28). As he explained to his brothers years later, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50:20).

There is one more thing dreams will do for you. Every dream comes with a consistent desire to pursue your dream. When people capture a sense of God's vision for their life and ministry, it becomes a consuming passion. Even when things were darkest, Joseph was consumed with his dream. He knew God had better things in mind than prison for His servant. He urged a fellow prisoner about to be released, "But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house" (Gen. 40:14). Though locked in an Egyptian dungeon, Joseph could see himself in the company of Pharaoh.

How to Get God's Vision for Your Life?

Those who understand the nature of vision and what it can do for them are among those most eager to learn God's vision for their life and ministry. Ultimately, God is still in control and has never abdicated His authority to intervene in human affairs (Prov. 21:1). He has dreams for each of us and longs for each of us to dream the dreams He has for our life. An analysis of Joseph's life suggests five conditions which might be viewed as prerequisites for acquiring insight into God's vision for our life.

Joseph is portrayed as a man of godly character in Scripture. The biblical account of his life begins with a reference to Joseph in contrast to his "evil" brothers (Gen. 37:2). The story of his refusal to become sexually involved with Potiphar's wife appears in the context of one of his older brothers committing incest (Gen. 38, 39). Joseph is one of very few people mentioned in Scripture which has no record of sin associated with his life. That does not mean Joseph was sinless. Rather, Joseph's character was so upright that his sins were not worth mentioning.

Second, Joseph learned to see life from God's perspective. The Bible uses the term "wisdom" to describe this ability and promises it to all who ask for it (James 1:5) and study the Scriptures (Ps. 19:7). Pharaoh had only known Joseph briefly when he commented, "there is no one as discerning and wise as you" (Gen. 41:38). The Psalmist describes Joseph as a teacher of wisdom to his elders (Ps. 105:22). Rabbinical commentators on the life of Joseph

claim he was a "wise son, endowed with knowledge beyond his years."

Third, Joseph was yielded to God and His will for his life. His refusal to become involved with Potiphar's wife was based on his commitment to God (Gen. 39:9). When given an opportunity to draw attention to himself through his ability to interpret dreams, he consistently identified God as the source of his gift and the One worthy of glory (Gen. 40:8; 41:16, 25, 28, 32). When he revealed his true identity to his brothers, his comments reveal he saw the various events in his life as part of God's leading (Gen. 45:5, 7, 8, 9; cf. 50:19-20). Joseph was deeply committed to accomplishing God's will for his life.

Joseph was also deeply committed to investing in people. His dreams always included other people. Years after he had been rejected by his family, he was still concerned about their welfare (Gen. 45:3). In his role in Potiphar's home, his duties involved managing people. Even in prison he took an interest in others (Gen. 40:6-7). The fulfillment of his dream involved saving people during a famine.

The Scriptures teach that only two things last forever, God's Word and people. God's vision for your life probably involves both. You need to be committed to both before God will show you all He has envisioned for you.

Ultimately, the key to Joseph's gaining insight into God's vision for his life was his communion with God. Twice the Bible records, "the Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2, 21). The Lord was with Joseph because Joseph was with the Lord. So intimate was the communion Joseph had with God that much of his life is similar to that of Jesus Himself. Both were despised by their brothers, sold for silver, falsely accused and destined to become a world saviour. The list of similarities is almost endless. Some Bible teachers describe the life of Joseph as the most complete biographical type of Christ in the Old Testament.

Discovering God's vision for your life and making it the basis of your dreams will mark the beginning of an exciting new era in your life. The challenges to overcome in the pursuit of your dream fade into insignificance in light of the rewards associated with the realization of your dream. But each of us has to determine how committed we will be to dreaming. Just as Joseph gained insight into God's vision for his life, so we too can apply the principles of dreaming to our life and dream great dreams. ■

Dreaming in Dark Hours and Dungeons

Some environments tend to be more conducive to dreaming than others. Joseph lived several years in an environment more conducive to nightmares.

I. Living in the No Dream Zone

- A. Joseph was raised in a _____ family in which his older brothers tended to _____ him and _____ his vision.
- B. The young man who dreamed of being a leader was _____ as a _____ in a completely foreign culture.
- C. The young man who tried to keep himself pure was constantly badgered by his employer's wife to become involved in an immoral relationship.
- D. The young man who proved himself _____ above and beyond the call of duty was thrown into prison.
- E. The young man who helped a member of the royal court with influence was _____ and ignored for two years.

II. Dreaming and Succeeding in the No Dream Zone

- A. Joseph's success was attributed to the blessing of the Lord. God blesses those with _____ and _____.
- B. Joseph's activities in the dark hours and dungeons demonstrate his _____ heart.
- C. Joseph was willing to take on responsibility and take on new challenges.
- D. Joseph proved himself to be a man _____ to certain core values.

NOTES

Dreaming in Dark Hours and Dungeons

As a favored son in the house of his father, Joseph's dreams of future greatness may not have seemed that out of place. Some environments tend to be more conducive to dreaming than others. Many who read of Joseph's dreams picture him living in a world so different from their own that few take time to attempt to apply principles of dreaming from Joseph's life to their own life. Unfortunately, the story of Joseph's coat of many colors has effectively hidden many of the scars of Joseph's life that when exposed make him look a little more like other mortals.

For seventeen years, Joseph lived in an environment more conducive to nightmares than dreams. He did not dream of greatness because of his conditioning in the home. Rather, his dreams of greatness came in spite of other factors that would discourage many people from dreaming at all. The problems Joseph began with continued to haunt him throughout his life. If these problems had been the natural consequences of his own behavior, that would have been bad enough. But most of Joseph's problems were thrust upon him by others.

Many people equate success in life with learning to avoid problems. Unfortunately, problems are unavoidable. Really successful people are those who have learned how to confront their problems and deal with them. They are people who, like Joseph, have learned to dream in dark hours and dungeons. They know life is neither perfect nor fair but is always worth living. Therefore they strive to live according to God's vision for their life in spite of the circumstances that might otherwise shape them. They understand one of the fundamental principles of the Christian life, i.e., that in every situation in life, God is at work using that situation to conform us into the image of Christ (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28-29).

Living in the No Dream Zone

While Joseph enjoyed the special favor of his father, other aspects of his home life made dreaming an unlikely prospect. He was raised in a severely dysfunctional family. Joseph's

blended family involved four different women who were called "mom" by one or more of his twelve brothers and sisters. About all he had in common with his rival siblings was a biological connection to a common father. The intense emotions of Jacob's wives had turned ugly long before Joseph was born. Their anger and hatred for each other was effectively passed on to their children. As a result, Joseph's older brothers tended to resent him and ridicule his vision.

As Joseph approached manhood, his dreams became more clearly defined, and he was able to communicate them clearly to others. Unfortunately, no others around him were willing to listen. Those closest to him did not want to consider the prospects that they might someday be compelled to recognize their son or brother as having significant power or authority over them. Although he had a clear sense of what God was going to do in his life, others were reluctant to buy into his dreams. In reality, some of those closest to him were committed to destroying the dreamer before the dream had any chance of being fulfilled.

On a routine trip to the fields to gather data needed to effectively manage the family farming activities, his brothers turned on Joseph, throwing him into a dry well and intending to kill him later. In anguish, Joseph pleaded with them for his life but was ignored (Gen. 42:21). The only thing that saved Joseph that day was a band of Midianite traders who happened to be passing by. "So the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty sheckels of silver" (Gen. 37:28).

Within days, the young man who had dreamed of greatness was being sold as a common slave in an Egyptian market. Everything he knew and loved was gone. For the rest of his life he would have to adapt to a completely foreign culture. The one thing so highly prized in his family, shepherding livestock, was looked down on as somewhat below the bottom rung of the ladder of opportunity. In Joseph's family, men wore beards as a symbol of their manhood. Egyptians prided themselves on being clean shaven. As a young adult Joseph would have

to learn an new language, acquire a new trade, and adapt his lifestyle to a new set of cultural norms and values.

Despite the challenges of his new life in Egypt, Joseph determined to do the best he could and remain true to his commitment to God. He was purchased by a royal executioner named Potiphar and appointed specific responsibilities in his household. His diligent work was rewarded with increased responsibilities. Before long, Joseph was administering one of the more prominent homes of Egypt, managing not only the affairs of the household but also the other business and commercial transactions of his master. While it was not exactly what he dreamed, things were beginning to look brighter.

There was only one problem with his success. As he became more prominent in managing household affairs, he attracted the attention of his employer's wife. At a time when extramarital affairs were not uncommon, she made it very clear to Joseph that she would consent. But Joseph's sense of responsibility to his employer and his personal commitment to God resulted in his refusing the offer others would have readily accepted. In spite of constant invitations by the attractive and influential woman, Joseph continued to refuse.

Potiphar's wife was not used to being refused anything, especially being refused by a slave. Perhaps he was simply afraid of being caught in the act. If so, she knew how to fix that. She worked out a plan that would place the two of them alone in the house. Convinced that would resolve Joseph's reluctance to get involved with her, she put her plan into action.

But Joseph still said no. In fact, when he realized he could no longer reason with her, he ran from the house, leaving his coat behind him. Once again an angry woman would influence others to turn on Joseph. By the time Potiphar returned home, most of the slaves were convinced Joseph had attempted to rape Potiphar's wife. When she made her accusation to her husband, Joseph's fate was sealed. That night he was admitted to a special section of the prison reserved for those who offended prominent Egyptian officials.

Most men imprisoned under such circumstances would have been angry. Very quickly, that anger would have evolved to bitterness as the reality of their situation dawned on them. Was it really possible that a man who had proved himself faithful above

and beyond the call of duty should be so falsely accused and imprisoned?

But there was something different about Joseph. His commitment to God that had kept him from Potiphar's wife now affected his life in different ways. Before long, the chief jailor began seeing potential in this new prisoner. He gave Joseph special responsibilities over a section of the prison and felt comfortable enough with Joseph in charge that he devoted his energies completely to managing other parts of the prison.

It was in this new sphere of responsibility that Joseph first met Pharaoh's butler. After a meal of bad wine and burnt toast, Pharaoh had ordered both the butler and baker responsible to prison. These men were assigned to Joseph's cell block and became his responsibility. As he got to know these men better, he soon learned that they too were dreamers.

The butler was the first to take time to explain his dream to Joseph. Upon learning the details of the dream, Joseph explained the meaning. In three days, the butler would be free again and restored to his former position. The imprisoned butler might have minimized the dream's interpretation if it hadn't been for Joseph's response. He explained his situation to the butler, asking him to tell others on the outside about him and work for his release. Obviously, Joseph believed his interpretation of the dream was right and for the first time in a long time, the butler saw a ray of hope. He might have promised Joseph much more, but telling his story to someone with authority on the outside was the least he could do.

When the baker realized Joseph had offered hope to the butler, he too wanted his dream interpreted. Unfortunately, his future was not as promising. About the time the butler would be released, the baker would be executed.

Three days later, everything happened just as Joseph had said. With the release of the butler, Joseph's spirits must have been raised. A responsible official in Pharaoh's court was now actively working for his release. In a matter of days, perhaps even hours, Joseph would be free. There was only one problem. The butler forgot his promise. Days turned into weeks, and weeks became months. Two years later, the butler had still failed to fulfill his promise. As news filtered back to the prison, it must have become obvious to Joseph that his ally on the outside

was not an ally at all.

Dreaming and Succeeding in the No Dream Zone

How does someone living in a “no dream zone” become a dreamer? And if somehow someone in that situation does dream, how does he or she overcome insurmountable obstacles to experience success? Once again, Joseph’s life experiences suggest several principles that will help each of us dream great dreams in the dark hours and dungeons of our experience.

First, Joseph understood and recognized that dreams come from God (Gen. 40:8). When we dream dreams that come from God, we dream beyond our circumstances and present situation. Dreaming helps us focus on God “who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Eph. 3:20). Dreaming helps us become power conscious rather than problem conscious. It shows us the future the way it could be with God’s intervention.

The problem with many “wanna-be” dreamers is that they are trying to find dreams within themselves. They look for the best in their situation in an attempt to discover their potential. But when people look for dreams within themselves, they limit the scope of their dream to that which they alone can accomplish. When we dream God’s dreams for our life, we realize they can only be accomplished “in dependence upon God.” Following the dreams God gives us compels us to live by faith. When you pursue God’s vision for your life, you can be confident “that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it” (Phil. 1:6).

Second, Joseph’s personal success was attributed to the Lord’s blessing. Joseph understood an important principle of the Christian life that Jesus taught His disciples many years later. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me” (John 15:4). Joseph produced in his life because he was connected to the Source of life. He did not let the hardships he had encountered hinder his relationship with God. As noted in the previous chapter, he maintained a deep communion with God throughout his life.

The Doctrine of Blessability teaches that God chooses to bless the faith and faithfulness

He sees in our life rather than withhold His blessing because of our inconsistencies. That being the case, priority should be given to doing those things which God has promised to bless. The following chart lists some of the things God promises to bless.

THE DOCTRINE OF BLESSABILITY

Living a Separated Life (Ps. 1:1)
Dealing with Personal Sin (Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:7)
Trusting in the Lord (Ps. 2:12; Jer. 17:7)
Considering the Needs of the Poor (Ps. 41:1)
Reverencing God (Ps. 112:1; 128:1)
Pursuing Wisdom (Prov. 8:34)
Enduring Temptation (James 1:12)
Reading the Scriptures (Rev. 1:3; 22:7)
Applying Biblical Principles (Ps. 119:1-2; Luke 11:28)

Third, Joseph’s activities in the dark hours and dungeons of his life demonstrate his servant’s heart. He took an interest in others and did more than was expected in his efforts to help them. He was appointed a slave in the house of Potiphar but soon took an interest in managing Potiphar’s affairs outside the household (Gen. 39:5). Not many prisoners would have taken the interest Joseph took in seeking to console Pharaoh’s imprisoned butler and baker. In reading about Joseph’s life, one is left with a distinct impression this man was devoted to serving others.

Serving others has always been the key to achieving lasting success in life. A successful businessman claims, “You can have anything you want in life, as long as you are prepared to give others everything they want.” By this he means the key to personal success in business is to give quality merchandise to your customers and place a high priority on serving their needs. Jesus taught His disciples, “he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves” (Luke 22:26).

Fourth, Joseph was willing to assume new responsibilities and take on new challenges in his pursuit of God’s vision for His life. Every dream is accompanied by unique challenges. Joseph began life as the son of a shepherd assuming he would someday become a shepherd himself. When he was sold into slavery, he faced the challenge of learning how to manage the

household then later business affairs of his master. Later, he found himself in prison learning how to manage other prisoners as part of the prison management team. Still later, Joseph became involved in rebuilding the economy of a nation during a period of international recession. Joseph's life is the life of one who was committed to learning how to respond to new challenges.

Many Christians miss this principle and plateau in their Christian life at a level far lower than God wants them too. When they trust Christ as Saviour, they begin developing the foundational disciplines of the Christian life such as personal Bible study; Scripture memory; prayer; Christian fellowship; witnessing to unsaved friends; relatives, associates, and neighbors; etc. As they develop these disciplines, many also find themselves dealing with correcting bad habits they developed prior to coming to faith in Christ. As they face these challenges and overcome them, they experience significant growth in their Christian life.

Then something happens. People tend to grow into a comfort zone in which their lifestyle conforms to that of other Christians around them. They no longer see the need to continue growing beyond the new challenges facing them. One Christian leader has suggested the average new Christian takes on about a dozen such challenges before plateauing in his or her Christian life. For some it may be fewer, others may accomplish more. But sooner or later, all of us begin to feel as though we have arrived in that comfort zone.

If we are to successfully pursue God's dream for our life, we need to continue taking on the new challenges that come our way. When we arrive at our comfort zone and find another mountain between us and our dream, we need to climb the mountain and continue pursuing God's vision for our life.

Finally, Joseph proved himself to be a man committed to certain unalterable core of values in life. He allowed his faith in God to govern the way he lived. In seeking to live by God's principals, he found sufficient reason to avoid becoming involved in an immoral relationship. Also, his faith in God enabled him to see God at work in a variety of situations in his life.

Jesus warned His disciples to build their lives on the bedrock of His principles rather than the shifting sands of public opinion (Matt. 7:24-27). The eternal principles of God

are revealed in Scripture for our benefit (Deut. 29:29). When we apply these principles to life, we find in them guidelines for living. Inside his Bible, D. L. Moody wrote these words, "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book."

All of us will encounter times which tend to discourage dreaming. Anyone can visualize a bright future in good times, but it takes a dreamer to dream in the dark hours and dungeons. When you find yourself living in a "no dream zone," remember Joseph. By applying the same biblical principles in your life, you too can dream great dreams and capture God's vision for you. ■

Opening the Door to Achieving Your Dreams

NOTES

I. Why Does It Take so Long to Achieve Your Dreams?

- A. Joseph's _____ prior to meeting Pharaoh were part of God's _____ to prepare him for a greater task.
- B. God's care for Joseph in the dark hours and dungeons became the _____ on which he could _____ God in the famine years.
- C. Our life _____ with others. Perhaps God was preparing Pharaoh to accept Joseph or his family to consider going to Egypt during the famine.
- D. Sometimes God _____ us to keep us available when we are needed. If Joseph had been released from prison, he may have left Egypt.
- E. The years it took to achieve the dream gave Joseph time to _____ God's hand in his brother's evil actions.

II. How Is the Door to Achieving Our Dreams Opened?

- A. A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men (Proverbs 18:16).
- B. The path to the _____ door is hidden behind a _____ door. If Joseph had not helped a fellow prisoner, he may have never met Pharaoh.
- C. Every Christian has a _____ with which to serve God. Your spiritual gift is the _____ to accomplishing the ministry to which God has called you.
- D. Be faithful in exercising your gift. If you don't _____ you may _____ it.
- E. Joseph recognized his gift was an enabling of God and was willing to give God the honor to which He is due. God raises up the humble and humbles the proud.

Opening the Door to Your Dreams

Some people dream dreams only to have their dreams come crashing in on the reality of life. They dream of a successful marriage on the eve of their wedding only to find themselves in divorce court a few years later. They dream of starting their own business but find themselves holding a going-out-of-business sale just a year or so down the road. They dream of completing a graduate degree at a prestigious school only to learn their grades are not high enough to gain admission in the school of their choice.

The Bible not only acknowledges the possibility of dying dreams, it warns of some of the consequences which accompany the death of a dream. First, "hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12). Then, "by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken" (Prov. 15:13). Ultimately, "a broken spirit dries the bones" (Prov. 17:22). These three verses warn us an unfulfilled dream can result in a period of depression which if allowed to continue unchecked will break our will to live and result in other physical health problems.

Considering the risks involved in dreaming and not realizing the fulfillment of your dream, one might ask if dreaming is worth the risk. The answer is yes! "Desire accomplished is sweet to the soul" (Prov. 13:19). This verse refers to a unique sense of fulfillment experienced by those who see their dream come to fruition. Also, "when the desire comes, it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12). This verse describes how the fulfillment of a dream motivates dreamers to dream and work to accomplish even greater dreams.

The problem many people have with dreaming is not a problem with dreaming at all. Rather, it is a problem with achieving all they dream. People who dream great dreams but never do anything to accomplish those dreams are not dreamers in the biblical sense of the expression. They simply daydream rather than pursuing God's dream for their life. They need to learn how to turn their dream into reality or they will be faced with some of the problems discussed above.

As we continue our study of dreaming, two questions need to be addressed. First, why does it take so long to achieve your dreams? No one accomplished God's dream for their life without the investment of significant time, energy and other resources. Second, how is the door to achieving our dreams opened? Simply working hard at achieving our dreams

is not enough. We must also work smart. That is, we must work hard at doing the right things to accomplish all we dream.

***Why Does it Take so Long
to Achieve My Dreams?***

Once again, the life of Joseph the dreamer provides a biblical basis for finding some of the answers to our questions about dreaming. The dream he had as a 17 year-old boy was not fulfilled until much later in his life. If He had chosen to do so, God could have placed Joseph in a place where he could have ruled much younger. But God chose not to do that. Instead, there appears to be a deliberate delay on God's part before giving Joseph his dream. The story of Joseph's life recorded in Genesis 37—50 suggest several reasons for the delay in his realizing his dreams. Some of these reasons may help us understand why God seems to delay in giving us all we dream.

Joseph's life experiences prior to meeting Pharaoh were part of God's training to prepare him for the greater task he was to face. One does not begin an administrative career by assuming a government post and rebuilding the economy of the world's most powerful nation during an international economic downturn. Rather, God allowed Joseph time to grow into this post through a wide variety of life experiences which allowed him to develop his administrative abilities. The lessons he learned managing the family farm, Potiphar's holdings and the cell block of the prison assigned to him prepared him for the greater task to which God was calling him.

A second reason for the delay may have been to develop his faith in God to a more mature level. God's care for Joseph in the dark hours and dungeons became the basis on which he could trust God during the severe famine years. As we grow in our experiential knowledge of God, we tend to develop a greater confidence in God. There are several reasons why this growth occurs. First, the better we understand the name (personality) of God, the more likely we are to trust Him (Ps. 9:10). Second, as we apply biblical principles in a variety of situations and see them work, our faith in God and His Word increases (Rom. 10:17). Third, as we see God work in a variety of experiences in life, our appreciation of God's ability to perform all He

has promised grows (Rom. 4:19-21).

Several Christians living in a community in which there was no significant evangelical church sensed God was leading them to begin one. Unsure their attempt would be successful, they agreed to rent a building and begin holding services. God blessed the new church with people coming to Christ through its ministry and attendance increased. A year later as the church was purchasing land, one of the newer members asked a respected charter member, "Aren't you nervous about our church buying land at this time?"

"Sure I'm nervous," the charter member explained. "But not near as nervous as I was a year ago when we were talking about starting this church." He went on to explain how seeing God work through the new church in its first year of ministry enabled him to trust God as the church purchased property on which they planned to develop a church campus.

Third, we must remember that our life interacts with others. Perhaps God's delay had more to do with preparing Pharaoh to accept Joseph or preparing Joseph's family to consider migrating to Egypt during the famine. Egyptologists have discovered a period when Egypt was ruled by a Semetic group called the Hixos. This ethnic group was apparently in power at the time Joseph rose to prominence. Later, the Hixos were overcome and an Egyptian pharaoh resumed governing the country (cf. Ex. 1:8). The reign of the Hixos represented a window of opportunity in which Joseph could be considered for a government post and other Semetic groups like Jacob's family would be welcomed in Egypt.

As a young man, Winston Churchill believed he would have a prominent role in leading his country during a period of international conflict. But when his country fought in World War I, he was not invited to be part of the war cabinet. During that time, he studied events carefully and shared his insights with others. Apart from his invention of an armored vehicle he called a "tank," his input was largely ignored. Later, as Hitler began consolidating his control of Europe, England looked for an insightful leader who could lead their country through World War II. King George called upon Churchill who had been rejected in a previous generation to form a government. Churchill's work during that period earned him the reputation of being one of the outstanding world leaders of his century.

Sometimes, God appears to restrict us from some activities to keep us available when we are needed. J. Vernon McGee suggested that if Joseph had been released from prison

when the butler was released, Joseph may have returned to Canaan and not been available to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. The next two years represented a period of waiting on God in Joseph's life.

In our contemporary fast-paced life, waiting on God is a spiritual discipline many of us struggle with. In our zeal to achieve our goals and accomplish our dreams, we often forget God made people to need periods of rest. Many Christians find taking time weekly or monthly for rest and reflection helps them be more productive in their Christian life. Others who refuse to take time to wait on God often find extended periods in their life where they are hindered from continuing their progress. Although these times may be frustrating, they later prove to be times when new insights are acquired that prepare one for a more effective phase of ministry.

Fifth, the years it took to achieve the dream gave Joseph time to recognize God's hand in his brother's evil actions. This time out period helped Joseph work through any negative attitudes he may have harbored against his brothers and deal with any bitterness which could have developed. The Bible describes bitterness as a root which saps our strength and renders us ineffective (Heb. 12:15). A bitter Christian is a poor channel for directing God's love to a hurting world. First, the bitter Christian needs to deal with past hurts and learn to forgive others. Then he or she can model God's love to others.

Ultimately, God is never late in His timing. Neither is God early. When we dream God's dream for our life, most of us would like to realize the dream before we are ready to handle it. Fortunately, God is still in control and loves us enough to withhold His blessing from us until we are able to receive it. God always accomplishes the things He plans "in the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4).

How Is the Door to Achieving My Dreams Opened?

Does this mean we should simply wait for God to give us our dream and not work toward achieving it? Those who feel that way fail to understand the Law of the Division of Labor. This biblical principle states that while only God can do what God can do, He also expects us to do what we can do. This principle may be drawn from a number of biblical examples including Joshua's conquest of Canaan.

God promised to give Joshua victory, but he expected Joshua to use his skills as a military leader to develop and carry out good military strategy. When Joshua did what he

could do, God came through with the promised victory. Joshua fought the battles, but only God could keep the sun in the sky, put fear in the heart of the enemy, or send a severe storm at just the right time.

This principle also describes how we achieve God's vision for our life. The dream motivates us to do all we can do to achieve it, but ultimately God gives us what we cannot achieve ourselves (Ps. 75:6). A church may apply church growth principles in an attempt to become a significant church in their community, but Jesus is the church builder (Matt. 16:18). A single mom struggles to raise her children to live their life according to biblical principles and Christian values, but God is the Father of the fatherless (Ps. 68:5). In our illness, we consult a doctor and take the prescribed treatment, but the Lord effects healing (Ex. 15:26).

But how can we know if we are doing the right things that will open the door to our dreams? Hard work is not enough to achieve God's vision for our life. We must work hard applying the right principles. Joseph's life suggests a few principles which may be effective in opening the door to our dreams.

The door to your dreams is connected to the gifts and abilities God has given you. "A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men" (Prov. 18:16). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is described as distributing spiritual gifts to Christians in accordance with His will (1 Cor. 12:11). God, Who is the source of our dream, is also the One who has gifted us uniquely to accomplish that dream. Joseph's ability to interpret dreams opened the door to his dream and brought him into contact with Pharaoh. His proven track record in administration made him the prime candidate for the new post to be created in the Egyptian government. He used his God-given gifts to achieve God's vision for his life.

Often, the path to the big door to our dreams is hidden behind a smaller door. If Joseph had not helped a fellow prisoner two years earlier, he may have never met Pharaoh. Little decisions often have major long-term results in our life. Therefore, we should be careful to consider what God would have us do as part of our personal decision-making process. The little things we do for others often open much larger doors of opportunity.

That is why faithfulness in ministry is so important to accomplishing God's vision for your life. Few of us are insightful enough to distinguish between the long-term potential consequences of each decision or act. But if we are consistent in the way we respond to every situation, a pattern is established that

provides a frame of reference for making other decisions and taking other actions in the future. Jesus observed, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). He then suggested God's willingness to entrust true riches to us was based on our track record of faithfulness (Luke 16:11-12).

Ultimately, God honors those who honor Him. Throughout his life, Joseph was careful to identify God as the source of dreams. He claimed his ability to interpret dreams was due only to God's enabling. His willingness to honor God and humble himself was one of the keys to God's honoring Joseph. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10).

The movie *Chariots of Fire* accurately describes the early life of Eric Lindell, thought to be the fastest man on earth. Lindell believed God had "made him fast" and that he should use his running ability to bring glory to God. He competed in athletic events in his native Scotland using those opportunities to share the Gospel with those who would not normally attend a church to hear a preacher. When he was given the opportunity to represent his country in the olympic games, he trained diligently for the race everyone assumed he would win.

Not until Lindell arrived at the games did he learn his race had been rescheduled and would be conducted on a Sunday. Lindell had a personal conviction about engaging in athletic events on Sunday which he felt should be devoted to worshipping God. When the event could not be rescheduled, he reluctantly withdrew from the race. Later, he was able to run in another race which he won. Moments before this later race began, a Christian friend sent Lindell a note containing the following verse: "Those who honor Me I will honor" (1 Sam. 2:30).

When we recognize God's vision for our life, it may appear larger than is possible to achieve. If it is God's vision for your life, it probably is larger than you could achieve on your own. But you can take steps to accomplish that part of the vision within your reach and allow God to do what only God can do. By applying the Law of the Division of Labor, you can open the door to your dreams. ■

When Dreams Become Real

NOTES

- I. How Does a Fulfilled Dream Affect a Dreamer?
 - A. God helped Joseph overcome the pain associated with his past (Genesis 41:51-52).
 - B. Joseph became involved in something _____ than he had ever been involved previously. His actions impacted the whole world.
 - C. Joseph _____ new _____ for his sons (Genesis 48).
 - D. Joseph dreamed new dreams for the _____ to come.

- II. How Does a Fulfilled Dream Affect a Nondreamer?
 - A. Jacob who used to dream at Bethel but stopped dreaming began to dream again (Genesis 46:2).
 - B. Each of Joseph's nondreaming brothers was given his own dream as the patriarch of a tribe of Israel (Genesis 49).

When Dreams Become Real

There is much to learn about dreaming from a man like Joseph. Early in life he captured God's vision for His life and doggedly pursued it until it was realized. He realized God's vision for His life would be beyond what he would normally imagine and learned how to dream beyond his own limitations. Possessing a sense of God's vision for his life enabled him to continue dreaming in the dark hours and dungeons of his life. He understood that the unique gifts and abilities God had given him were the key to opening the door to his dreams. Finally, after many years, Joseph realized his dream and accomplished God's vision for his life.

Great visions take time to realize. The greater the vision, the more time will be needed to turn that dream into reality. When one determines to pursue a dream as significant as grasping God's vision for his or her life, it may take much of his or her life to achieve that goal. God told the prophet Habakkuk, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come. It will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3). Taking time to pursue God's vision for your life is time well invested.

But what happens when that dream is finally realized? What does a dreamer do when his or her dreams are fulfilled? How does the dreamer respond to the new reality he or she faces when the goal is finally accomplished?

The life of Joseph the Dreamer suggests real dreamers never stop dreaming. The Scriptures express this principle in the proverb, "when desire comes, it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12). The outworking of this principle is illustrated in Joseph's life. His realization of God's vision for His life resulted in his continuing to dream greater dreams. Also, when nondreamers and former dreamers saw Joseph accomplish God's vision, they too were motivated to dream great dreams.

***How Does a Fulfilled Dream
Affect a Dreamer?***

Achieving God's vision for your life is one way to overcome some of the pain associated

with your past. The process by which dreams are achieved is never easy. Often we pass through painful and frustrating experiences on our way to realizing our dreams. Every dreamer has his dark hours and dungeons. But a sweetness is associated with accomplishing God's vision for your life which is much greater than the suffering endured on the way. "A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul" (Prov. 13:19).

Joseph testified to this reality at the birth of his sons during the good years prior to the international economic crisis for which he was preparing Egypt. He named his first son Manasseh and explained, "God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house" (Gen. 41:51). Achieving his dream helped him overcome the pain associated with being a part of a dysfunctional family. In naming his second son Ephraim, he acknowledged, "God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" (Gen. 41:52). In achieving his dream he concluded the rewards far outweighed the problems he had faced and overcome on the way.

Achieving his dreams also introduced Joseph to new challenges significantly greater than anything in which he had been involved previously. As a prominent minister in the Egyptian cabinet, Joseph's actions impacted the whole world. He guided the world's most powerful nation through a period of radical economic reform. During an international economic downturn, Joseph guided Egypt in a way that both addressed the important domestic concerns of the nation and produced a trade surplus in its dealings with other peoples.

Perhaps that is one reason God tends to reveal His vision for our life in parts. The 17 year-old boy who dreamed of being recognized as a leader by his family was not capable of grasping God's full vision for his life as a crisis leader of a great nation. God's vision for your life may be larger than you could handle right now. But as we pursue that part of the vision we can grasp, God prepares us to grasp a better understanding of all He has in store for us. It is not uncommon to see a dream grow as you begin working to achieve your dream.

When Joseph accomplished his dream, he continued dreaming. He knew firsthand the power of a dream. He wanted each of his sons to experience dreaming for themselves. Following the custom of his people, Joseph brought his sons to their grandfather for the blessing. This involved Jacob sharing his dreams for his grandsons (Gen. 48:9). Even today, the blessing of children in Jewish homes leaves a positive and lasting impact upon both children and grandchildren. It gives them a dream to live up to and a special sense of a unique purpose in life.

But Joseph's new dreams went far beyond his own family. He dreamed new dreams he knew would not be realized for generations to come. He gave his people a dream that would guide them for four hundred years. It is not surprising that the last recorded words of Joseph are those of a dreamer sharing his dream. "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here" (Gen. 50:25). Did this dream have any real significance for Israel in Egypt? Apparently so. As Israel quickly left Egypt on the night of the Exodus, "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him" (Gen. 13:19).

How Does a Fulfilled Dream Affect the Nondreamer?

Achieving one's dreams not only impacts the dreamer, it also encourages nondreamers to dare to dream. The description of Jacob and his family in Egypt after the famine suggests the fulfillment of Joseph's dream helped two different kinds of nondreamers to dream great dreams and focus on God's vision for their life.

Some of these nondreamers are former dreamers like Jacob who became discouraged at some point and stopped dreaming great dreams. Jacob had dreamed at Bethel but the biblical account of his life suggests the patriarch was sidetracked from dreaming during his twenty years in Haran. That may explain why he seemed reluctant to encourage his son's dreaming and at times appeared to respond harshly (Gen. 37:10). The dream seemed incredible, but perhaps the real reason Jacob opposed his son's dreams was that they reminded him that he too was once a dreamer.

Joseph's achieving his dream gave his father new hope and once again, Jacob began dreaming. Even on his way to Egypt to meet his son, Jacob gained insight into God's vision for His life (Gen. 46:2-4). This time he was

willing to pursue his dream with greater zeal. The New Testament describes Jacob as a man of faith who in his dying took time to share his dreams with his sons (Heb. 11:21).

The second kind of nondreamer includes those who have never dreamed. There is no indication in Scripture that any of Joseph's brothers ever had a dream or expressed any interest in pursuing God's vision for their life. But the fulfillment of their brother's dream and renewal of dreaming by their father resulted in each of them gaining insight into God's vision for their life (Gen. 49). Before the biblical account of Joseph and his brothers comes to an end, each of the sons of Jacob has a dream which would guide them and their descendants for years to come.

Let's Take Inventory!

God has a special vision for your life that can give your life a far more significant meaning and purpose than could be realized in any other context. As we have studied the principles of dreaming in the life of Joseph the Dreamer, you have come face-to-face with the challenge of dreaming great dreams, enduring the dark hours and dungeons which may be involved in pursuing your dreams, and using your God-given gifts and abilities to open the door to achieving your dreams. But simply considering the principles is not enough. Are you prepared to pursue God's vision for your life?

Your church has a dream. Jesus Himself revealed His vision for your church and others like it when He called on His followers to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Your church exists to "make dedicated disciples out of nominal believers." That vision gives direction to the ministry of your church which involves "equipping all members to find, develop, and use their spiritual gifts in evangelistic outreach and nurturing ministry to others." This is a dream big enough to challenge your church for years to come as it consistently pursues God's vision and takes steps to turn this dream into reality.

Not everybody is a dreamer, but everybody can become a dreamer. The choice is really yours. May God help you dream great dreams and pursue His vision for your life. ■

Teacher's Worktext Outline Answers

Lesson One: Dreaming Beyond Your Limitations

- I. clear mental image / God, self, circumstances
- II. A. direction
B. new challenges
C. future focused
D. consistent desire
- III. A. character
B. wisdom
C. yielded
D. committed
E. communion

Lesson Two: Dreaming in Dark Hours and Dungeons

- I. A. dysfunctional / resent / ridicule
B. sold / slave /
D. faithful
E. forgotten
- II. A. faith / faithfulness
B. servant's
D. committed

Lesson Three: Opening the Door to Achieving Your Dreams

- I. A. experiences / training
B. basis / trust
C. interacts
D. restricts
E. recognize
- II. B. big / little
C. gift / key
D. use / lose

Lesson Four: When Dreams Become Real

- I. B. greater
C. dreamed / dreams
D. generation

PROMOTION

This section contains three sample letters, *Vision Day* bulletin and bulletin insert, and a poster to help promote your *Vision Day* workshop. The camera-ready artwork is provided to help give your program professionalism, credibility, and personalization while decreasing your printing costs.

Turn your office copier into an instant printing machine!

Some items can be copied on your church copy machine without changes, while some may require type to be set in order to personalize them. In some cases you can cut the heading from a church letterhead or envelope and paste it over the suggested location on the artwork. You may choose to send some things to your local printer.

Sample Letter 1

Letter of invitation to all church members

Date

Dear members,

Insert date will be a special day for insert church name. As we implement *Vision Day* and embark on claiming our place in the 21st Century, I believe God is going to do mighty things

I'm inviting your family to join us for this exciting event in the life of our church.

Our *Vision Day* campaign will work our church through the process of finding a vision. I hope that *Vision Day* will result in a clear understanding of God's purpose for our church. I need you to be present at our *Vision Day* workshop. I need you to be a part of our church's future.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor

Sample Letter 2

Letter to remind congregation of schedule change for Vision Day

Date

Dear members,

As you know, *Vision Day* is this coming Sunday. I hope you plan to be present to help us capture a vision for the future of our church.

Remember that our schedule will be a little different. After the morning worship, we will have a luncheon and time of fellowship. Lunch will begin promptly at *insert time* so that we may begin our *Vision Day* workshop at *insert time*.

The following is our schedule for the *Vision Day* workshop:

SCHEDULE

Looking forward to seeing you at *Vision Day*.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor

Sample Letter 3

Letter thanking all those who helped with the Vision Day workshop

Date

Dear insert name,

Our *Vision Day* workshop was a tremendous success. I believe God is going to guide us into a clear vision of the future.

I want to personally thank you for all of your help with the *Vision Day* workshop. Your assistance was invaluable. We couldn't have done it without you. May the Lord bless you in all you do in serving Him at insert church name.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor

Welcome to...

Vision Day

Your church name
Your church address
Your church logo

5½" x 8½"

You are invited to attend...

insert church name here

Vision Day Workshop

to be held

insert date and time of workshop

Your Church Logo

5½" x 8½"

You are invited to attend...

Vision Day

Video
Workshop

What you will learn:

- How to capture God's vision for your life
- How to be a dynamic part of capturing God's vision for your church
- A six-step strategy for growth in your spiritual life
- How to pray so that your vision is the same as God's vision
- How the church will minister to you and use you in ministry to others

**Don't
Miss
It!**

Taught by Dr. Elmer Towns, this powerful video workshop will enlighten you and help you to gain a new vision for your life and family. Join us for this exciting event.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____