

# The Need for Vision

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In Hot Springs, Arkansas, you'll find the Morris Antique Mall. Nothing on the inside distinguishes this antique store from dozens like it in town. There is a musty smell and dusty relics from the past when you go into the store. But if you look closely at the outside of the Morris Antique Mall, you'll see something that makes it distinct: before it was an antique store, it was a church building.

I think there are many churches over the years that become like an antique store which have a musty smell to them and dusty relics of the past sitting around. But God has not planned for the church to become an antique shop that lives in the past. \*\*A focus on the future and a fresh vision prevents a church from becoming a resting place for dusty relics. God's church must continue to have vision and be looking ahead instead of living in the past. Every church must strive for the things that God has for them in the future. We must remember what God has not called us to roll over and die in spite of the last days in which we live, in spite of hard times in the past, and in spite of the difficulties that we must face.

God has His seasons to work and there are times when He chooses to bless and build church ministries in wonderful ways.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up."

A war hero once said:

"We lost because we told ourselves we lost."

Many churches burn out and lose their light or "remove" their "candlestick" (Rev. 1:5) because they have convinced themselves they are defeated. They give up the ship. What we need is renewed vision and vitality in ministry as we move toward the day of Christ's

return. Let us also remember that we do not catch God's vision, God's vision catches us! Churches must cast a vision for the future, while at the same time, surrendering the vision to God's purpose and plan. Although specific visions will be given for specific church ministries there is a general vision that we should possess in our hearts in these days of opportunity. A general vision every church should possess involves following the Great Commission (Mark 16:15' Matt. 28:19-20). They should want to see souls saved, new converts disciplined, and the lives of God's people being encouraged and built up in the faith. As a church casts a vision they should also pray for newly saved and serving families to come into the assembly, who will support the ministry doctrinally and financially, families who God would want in the church ministry, families who are reachable and teachable (2 Tim. 2:24).

My friend, the last days are upon us. We should have a sense of urgency about ministry today and investing in the lives of others. God wants to work through the local church, as we abide by His Biblical commands and principles, and as we approach Him and ask for His true blessing.

George Sweeting said:

"The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing."

This should be true in relationship to casting vision. Our vision should center upon seeing the church ministry grow according to God's design (Acts 2:42) and having God's true favor and blessing. Our vision today should be to invest in the lives of people and see God's ministry and work grow. Again this blessing should involve seeing souls saved, saints growing, and specific families coming into the church ministry who are on fire for the Lord.

Someone said:

"Men who live in the past remind me of a toy I'm sure all of you have seen. The toy is a small wooden bird called the 'Floogie Bird.' Around the Floogie Bird's neck is a label reading, 'I fly backwards. I don't care where I'm going. I just want to see where I've been.'"

Friend, if we live this way we will lack vision for our personal lives and for the future of church life and ministry. We can't fly backward; we must fly forward!

There are four things to do when casting a vision.

### **1. We must remember something.**

As we cast a vision for the future and step out in faith by establishing plans and goals, we must remember that God is the One who is going to do the work in the hearts and lives of people. The psalmist made something abundantly clear: It's God who ultimately blesses and builds the house!

Psalm 127:1

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

In other words, by itself, human effort is doomed to ultimate failure. Only when God works through expecting humanity, can they be truly successful. It is "vain" (empty task) to attempt things without the true blessing of the Lord. The point is that work done independently of God will miss His true blessing and in the end be futile!

I have a line drawn from Psalm 127:1 back to Psalm 126:3 which say, "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

We must remember:

"There is man's harvest, but there is also the true harvest."

The true harvest comes from the work and blessing of God. This verse is teaching one thing. The Lord must ultimately work in the circumstances related to the building process. The Lord must do the work or bring the blessing. If anything of lasting value takes place; it's because God will do it!

The psalmist chooses four common activities of life to illustrate God's blessing.

#### a. Construction (vs. 1a)

There are two ways to build a house. One is to move ahead with plans based on one's own knowledge, skill, and financial resources, then, after the fact, ask God's blessing on the completed structure. The other is to wait until the LORD has given unmistakable guidance, then move ahead in conscious dependence on Him. In the first case, the project never rises above flesh and blood (man's own achievements). In the second case, when God does the work, there is the thrill of seeing God working through the marvelous provision of needed supplies, through the miraculous timing and sequence of events, and through the converging of circumstances that would never happen according to the laws of chance.

We witnessed this with the building of the Berean Bible Church. Large monetary gifts were given, along with the donation of equipment and time, which enabled us to erect the church building. God supplied the needs in a miraculous way. It makes all the difference in the world when we allow God to providentially build and do the work. Why? It's because God ultimately is the One who builds the house!

The application of the building project of a house is true in connection with church ministries and reaching out in vision for the future. God ultimately is going to do it! We work, pray, and believe but God is the one who brings the true blessing.

#### b. Defense (vs. 1b)

The second illustration of the futility of human effort without God is in the area of security: "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh (stays awake) but in vain." This does not mean we should not have a police force or other protective agencies. Rather, it means that ultimately our security lies in the Lord, and unless we are really depending on Him, our ordinary precautions are not enough to keep us safe. All your burglar alarms and safety precautions will not help. God in His providence ultimately gives safety!

Psalm 4:8

"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

We must pray that God will put a guard around our lives and church ministries and keep us safe from being overcome by the wiles and tactics of the enemy (Eph. 6:11). We must claim God's safety and victory.

c. Employment (vs. 2)

Psalm 127:2

"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

In our everyday employment, it is futile to work long hours, earning one's living through anxious toil, unless we are in the place of God's choosing and dependent upon His blessing. Please don't misunderstand. Throughout the Bible we are taught to work diligently to supply our own needs, the needs of our family, and the needs of others (1 Tim. 5:8). This Psalm does not encourage people to sit around all day drinking Cokes and sponging off friends. But the point is this - if we are working hard without dependence upon God, we don't really get anywhere in life. We flap our wings and make a lot of dust but never get anywhere spiritually and never really do great things for God! We only exist to live instead of live to find God's true blessing and meaning in life.

d. Family (vv. 3-5)

Psalm 127:3-5

"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

Children are God's heritage (a God-given inheritance from the Lord). It's ultimately the Lord who blesses the womb and brings life and builds the family. Man has nothing to do with the remarkable and miraculous conception and birth of a baby. It's all of God!

Psalm 139:14

“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”

The point of these illustrations is that God must do the work in the hearts and lives of people or else the work is manufactured by man and becomes a futile work. This reminds me that man’s worldly and carnal pragmatic attempts to build God’s church today are vain; they are not the result of God’s true work taking place in the hearts and lives of people. When God begins to work, then the true blessing comes!

We must always remember that it’s God who brings in the harvest. It’s God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:7). Jesus said, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

## **2. We must believe something.**

Without vision and faith, we begin to dry up! And when a man’s faith is dried up; then he has lost everything in life. When we cast a vision for the future we must believe that God is going to bless in wonderful ways and bring in a harvest. We must step out in faith and believe in God’s power and working in the lives of people.

Luke 5:4-9

“Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.”

- a. Launch our faith (vv. 4-5)

We must cast out our nets out in faith and believe that God wants to give us a new catch! Are we really going to believe God for His blessing? Are we willing to cast our nets when it seems like the sea is without any fish? Are we ready to say, “nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” and believe God for the blessing?

Charles De Gaulle once described the qualities of a person who possesses grandeur. "He must aim high, show that he has vision, act on the grand scale, and so establish his authority over the generality of men who splash in the shallow water." Let's not live in the shallow water but launch out into the deep and see God's blessing!

Jesus said in Matthew 17:20:

“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

Jesus is encouraging His disciples to pray in faith, believing and expecting God to do wonderful and mighty things, when they pray and ask Him to bless their lives.

b. Leave God change our circumstances (vv. 6-7).

In verse six, we must note that when God blesses, the nets are full (“let down your nets for a draught”). God does the work because it is His work. We will not catch just one little fish, when God is in it, there is no end to what He can do! We are merely the instruments that God uses in the work (Rom. 10:14-15). We might cast the net overboard but it's God who brings in the great catch! Also, in verse seven, we discover that when God blesses we need helpers to accommodate the blessing! The Bible says, “they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them.” The blessing of God is too great for only a few to handle the net! This is exciting to realize. God knows how to bless and do great and wonderful things, if we will only step out in faith and trust Him to do the work.

Exodus 36:6-7

“And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman

make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.”

This is the dream of the preacher!

c. Let faith humble our hearts (vv. 8-9)

The result of expressing faith in God and seeing Him work is humility. We swallow our pride and realize how sinful and low we are in comparison to God and His greatness. Peter said, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” When we see God work in special ways we will realize the insignificance of ourselves, that we are only sinners saved by grace, and be astonished that God would choose to work and bless us in the way that He does. The true working of God will humble us and cause us to realize we are nothing but dust in relationship to God’s working and blessing.

Psalm 103:14

“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”

Hebrews 11:6 also speaks of vision and faith:

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

In this verse we see that faith pleases God. In other words, we can’t please God when we pray and don’t believe that He can bring blessing upon our church ministries and personal lives. God is pleased with us when we launch out in faith and believe that He will do wonderful things in the hearts and lives of people. When we catch a vision we can launch out in faith and this pleases God!

There are two reasons why faith pleases God.

- Because faith believes in God.

The Bible says “he is.” We can’t please God when we don’t believe in God! This speaks of God’s existence and His ability to intervene in



the affairs of our lives. God is here waiting to bless our lives in ways we could never imagine!

Someone wrote:  
“Your God is too small.”

This may be true in relationship to how we perceive God and His greatness and when we forget that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. We must believe that He is! Don't you think that the same God who created the universe can bring special blessing upon a church ministry who is ready to follow His plan and prescription for blessing? Many Christians are like atheists because they really don't believe God can do great and mighty things. We must believe that God is, who He says He is, and trust Him to do wonderful things by raining His spiritual blessings upon our personal lives and church ministries.

➤ Because faith expects from God.

The Bible says that true faith will be rewarded by God (“he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”). The one who possess great faith will experience great spiritual blessing or reward from God as they by faith seek God's face which speaks of obedience and fellowship with God on a daily basis.

Someone wrote:  
“The turning point in our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.”

When we seek God it means we are searching to live in close communion and fellowship with Him. It also means that we are ready to obey Him at any cost! When we seek God's presence and obey His will for our lives, we can be sure that He will reward us with many blessings! There is no place for deism in this verse. God is ready to enter our lives and bless us. Here is the point. Faith seeks God out and expects reward and blessing to come from Him. By the way, if we are not in right relationship with God, we can't expect great things from God. The two work hand in hand.

Samuel Johnson said:

"Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome."

God wants to increase our faith and grow us, so we can make new strides in believing God for His abundant supply and blessing. God had promised Elijah that it would rain (1 Kings 18:1-2) and in 1 Kings 18:41 Elijah told Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain." This is the ear of faith. Elijah could hear it raining even before it made its way across the land to where the two were standing. He knew rain was coming for he believed what God had promised and what He could do. Are we ready to see God's blessing? Are we ready for God's showers of blessing? Do we hear the rain coming? We must have great faith today as we step out to receive God's blessing.

When J. L. Harris died, several people at the funeral shared stories about his life, including this one: During the Depression years Harris lived in rural Tennessee. One day he was driving down a back road and saw a farmer out plowing his field. He pulled over and sat there watching. After a while, he got out and walked over to where the farmer was working.

"I'm not sure why, but I just feel impressed to give you this money," Harris said, as he handed him \$18. The farmer was quite taken aback by this. He finally said, "You know, when I got up this morning, I knew I didn't have enough money to buy seed for planting. This money will buy enough seed to plant my whole field."

The remarkable thing about this story is not so much Harris' generosity or that he would give money away just on impulse. The amazing thing is the faith and vision of that farmer. He was out there plowing even though he didn't have any seed to put in the ground, but he believed God was telling him to plow anyway. He believed in spite of the circumstances, and God honored that by changing the circumstances.

Hebrews 11:1 speaks to the subject of faith and vision:  
"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Faith believes without seeing. Many will tell you that “seeing is believing” but true faith is the opposite: “Believing is seeing!” Faith is “the evidence of things not seen.” Vision is the art of seeing things invisible! We see them before they actually occur or come to life. Vision is the eye of faith to see the invisible and the decisiveness to make it visible. Vision involves seeing things taking place which have not yet taken place.

Someone said:

“Go as far as you can see, and when you get there you will always be able to see farther.”

### **3. We must pray about something.**

Every church must pray and plead for God’s blessing if they are going to see God do some wonderful things in their midst. We must pray that souls would be saved, that we would have effective ministry, and that new families would come into the church that would stay and help build up God’s work in God’s way. So, let us keep praying!

James 5:17-18

“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

a. God uses plain people – “like passion”

If anything is going to happen; it’s going to happen when ordinary, plain, simple folk, like you and me, begin to pray. God does not use professionals He uses pleaders! He does not use big shots; He uses little shots!

b. God uses praying people – “prayed earnestly”

Elijah earnestly prayed for God’s blessing. He went to God and pleaded that He would answer his prayer in the way He prayed. Many times we don’t pray in earnest – with great passion and say, “O God, bless us, O God, make Yourself known to us in a real and mighty way.” Don’t be a nominal Christian; be a praying Christian! Let the

fire of prayer and pleading before God burn in your soul once again! Our problem is that we become cold and insensitive to the things of the Lord over time. The fire of prayer and the burning desire to see God work and souls saved through prayer is lacking in our personal lives and churches.

James 4:2 says: “ye have not, because ye ask not.” We are not ready and willing to storm the gates of Heaven and plead with God for His blessing. This is why the blessing many times does not come.

James 1:6-8 says:

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

If we really don't believe that God will bring the blessing and grant the request that we are asking for, then we are unstable. James uses the illustration of waves of the sea being tossed by the wind, in order to teach how many Christians move back and forth from faith to unbelief, when they pray. They quickly move out of the realm of faith into the realm of unbelief. If this is the case, then we are unstable in our praying and living. If we don't pray believing, then don't expect from God – “let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” Friend, the blessing does not come without some old-fashioned prayer - when God's people mean business with God.

James 5:16

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

We have forgotten the power that is behind the fervent prayer of a righteous man and the united prayers of God's people.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says:

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

Are we willing to take the challenge? The Bible asks: "If my people." In other words, if we are willing to do this, then God will bring down His blessing.

a. The prescription for blessing

When we humble ourselves together in prayer, seek a close personal relationship with God, and turn from our wicked ways (sinful lifestyles of neglect and corruption); its then the blessing falls! You are missing the true blessing, if you are not willing to confess it up, give it up, and pray it up!

Jeremiah taught that we must often tear down before we can build up and experience His true blessing.

Jeremiah 1:10

"See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

We sometimes wonder why God does not bless our personal lives and ministries more than He does. Maybe you have some sin hanging over your head that needs to be taken care of. You know about it, but you are not willing to cough it up! Before any building and planting takes place, there needs to be some rooting out and pulling down. While this may seem harsh, removing the sin in our lives and those in opposition to God's work is the only way to strengthen and build a church. We need to follow God's prescription, if we want God's healing and blessing upon your lives and church ministry.

b. The promise of God

God promises that He will hear our pleading from Heaven and begin to bring His blessing upon our personal lives, family, and church ministry. If we follow the prescription the promise will come to pass! Let's not lose sight of God's promise and all that He promises us when we plead before Him and expect from Him. The principle of this well-known verse is this. God moves when His people pray. Without prayer and pleading there will be no movement and blessing from God.

A man was driving through a mining region one Sunday when he noticed a large number of mules in an open field. When he inquired about this unusual sight, he was told that the work animals had been brought up from the dark passages below to preserve their eyesight. Unless they were regularly exposed to the sunlight, they would eventually go blind. My friend, if we don't have vision for God's blessing, we will eventually lose our spiritual sight, which God wants us to have for the souls of men and for saints who need a fundamental church ministry, so they can grow spiritually. Are we ready to really pray and plead with God, as a pure vessel, so we can hear from Heaven?

Jesus said in Luke 11:9-10

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Jesus is applying the previous illustration to the ministry of prayer. He talked about a man persistently knocking on a house door early in the morning to get food for his family. The application and promise is this: when we are persistent in our prayer life, God will answer in ways we could never imagine. The believer is pictured as the pesky neighbor knocking on the door at midnight and God is the One who answers our requests.

This supernatural promise is described in two ways:

- It's simple ("Ask," "seek," "knock") - 11:9
- It's sure ("given," "opened," "receiveth," "findeth") - 11:10

In applying this illustration, we must be careful to avoid certain conclusions. It doesn't mean that God is annoyed by our persistent requests like the neighbor in the illustration. Furthermore, it doesn't suggest that the only way to get our prayers answered is to pray persistently for a length of time. Sometimes God answers our prayers without being persistent. What this parable is teaching is that we do not have to become discouraged in our time of praying and petitioning. God knows we are knocking at the door of Heaven. His ears are not closed. The prayer parable teaches that we should not

grow weary or discouraged in our prayer lives but “Keep on asking ... keep on seeking ... keep on knocking.” And yes, keep on believing! This is a lesson on persistent pleading and prevailing prayer. Sometimes God answers our prayers the first time we ask but in other cases He answers only after a time of prolonged asking. The point is this: we must plead with God and believe in God!

Charles Spurgeon used to say:

“Prayer pulls the rope down below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give only an occasional jerk at the rope. But he who communicates with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously with all his might”

Have you been knocking at Heaven’s door? Are we ready to ring the doorbell of Heaven and get God’s attention? Do we really believe that God is going to answer our prayers? If we truly have vision, we will plead with God for His blessing and believe in God for His answer.

So how long should we keep knocking on the door?

- ✓ Until God answers our prayer in the way we asked (1 John 5:14).
- ✓ Until God assigns a different answer to our prayer (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
- ✓ Until God absolutely shuts the door and opens another (1 Cor. 16:9).

Dr. John Walvoord put it well when he said:

“Prayer is much like a check to be countersigned by two parties. I sign the check and send it up to heaven. If Jesus Christ also signs it, it does not matter how large it is -- it'll be honored.”

God promises in Jeremiah 33:3:

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

The teaching and principle behind this verse is the same. When we plead before God and believe in His power, He promises to answer our prayers in ways we could never dream or imagine.

Someone wrote:

“If you can explain what is happening; God didn’t do it.”

A vision for what God can do is one thing. However, planning for what God will do is quite another. This is because God can do great and mighty things. Vision is the God-given energy which will make you become a risk-taker. Faith sometimes takes risks! It does not always sit in a comfortable lazy boy chair. It is willing to step out and step it up!

Vision and faith encompasses vast prospects outside the realm of the predictable, the safe, and the expected. When the church starts asking “Is it safe?” instead of “Is it God’s will?” then the church is in trouble. Yes, God always answers according to His will and plan (1 John 5:14-15) but we can’t receive without asking nor can we expect great things from God without asking.

William Carey said:

“Expect great things from God; attempt great things from God!”

I think many of our prayers are ten cent prayers. We expect a 100-dollar answer from a 50 cent prayer! Let’s start praying with a believing and burdened passion about people and ministry and see God work!

Winston Churchill once commented:

“The great thing is to get the true picture, whatever it is!”

In relationship to living the Christian life, the greatest thing is to have vision for those things which are right, eternal, and spiritual in nature. We must get the true picture for church ministry today and launch off in faith believing that God wants to change the lives of people and do great and mighty things.

#### **4. We must give something.**

Malachi 3:10

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I



will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

God promises to bless when we give! Giving financially to God’s work is always results in the blessing and favor of God being poured out upon a ministry. When we look at verse such as this in the Old Testament, we are not concluding that everything about tithing and bringing food to a storehouse is applicable to the Church. We don’t tithe food, animals, stockpile a storehouse today, as Israel did, nor are we commanded to give a strict amount while living under grace. The strictness of the Mosaic Law is not to be introduced and interpreted in the place of Church truth (1 Cor. 16:2). However, the principle and application found in the verse is very important to all of us today.

Romans 15:4

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

Here is the principle. When we give; God promises to bless! God says I will “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” The more we give the greater God blesses! If you want a dollar blessing, then give a dollar. If you want a 50-dollar blessing, then give 50 dollars. If you want a 100-dollar blessing, then give one hundred dollars. The point is this; when we give sacrificially; its then that God will bless our lives and church ministry in wonderful ways. Giving results in God’s blessing. God says, “prove me now” (Malachi 3:10) – test me and see if I will do what I say! This means that many different kinds of blessings come into our personal lives and church ministries when we give. They might be spiritual, physical, and financial blessings.

Jesus in Luke 6:38 echoes this same truth:

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete (measure out) withal it shall be measured to you again.”

This is said in relationship to how we treat other people (vv. 36-37). How you treat others will normally come back to you. If you show mercy and forgive others, then you will receive mercy and forgiveness in return; if you judge and condemn others, then you will eventually have these things coming back to you by others. What you give out is normally what you get back! This is a principle of life.

The same truth is applied to our giving. Those who give generously are rewarded generously in many ways. The picture is of a man with a large apron-like fold in the front of his garment. He uses it for carrying seed. The more widely he broadcasts (spreads) the seed, the greater his harvest will be. He is rewarded with a good measure of harvest, which is described as being pressed down and shaken together and running over.

This illustration comes from the marketplace where grain was poured out, shaken down, and then filled to overflowing so the buyer received the full amount purchased. This illustration speaks of the full measure that will be returned to us when we have been generous in sowing. There is a fixed spiritual principle in life that we will reap according to our sowing. The Bible teaches the same measure we give sooner or later comes back to us. Here is the spiritual lesson. What we sow in relationship to how we treat others is normally what we reap by others. What goes around comes around! In a similar way, what we sow materially, we reap by way of God's supply and spiritual treasures.

If we live to give, God will see to it that we receive; but if we live only to get, God will see to it that we lose. This principle applies not only to giving ourselves in ministry to other people but also giving of our money in God's work. Every cheerful giver knows both the joy of giving and the joy of God's blessed provision. God entrusts more wealth to those who He knows will properly dispense it.

2 Corinthians 9:6 says the same thing:

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”

Someone said:

“What we keep we lose, and what we give we have.”

This is certainly true in relationship to God's blessing and eternal reward. When we learn to give God blesses. What we discover from all this that vision is the power that causes people to make huge sacrifices in order to become all they can become for God. When we give God blesses our lives and churches.

In conclusion, when casting a vision:

- We must remember something.
- We must believe something.
- We must pray about something.
- We must give something.

Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor, was once working on a head of Lincoln. A woman who was sweeping out his studio wondered what he was doing. One day she finally recognized the face of Abraham Lincoln emerging from the stone. Very much surprised, she turned to Borglum and asked, "How did you know that Mr. Lincoln was in that piece of stone?" Or course, the artist could see the face of Lincoln before he has carved it. He had vision! Do we? Are we willing to remember, believe, pray, and give as we look ahead for the blessing of God upon our personal lives and church ministry?

My friend, vision is a bridge from the past to the future! Vision is adopting an action-plan that will enable us to move forward in our Christian life and ministry. Vision also helps pastors to grow in leadership, the people to grow in faith, and God's people to be inspired to be part of something great! We need to be reminded that preachers who are leaders will have vision, even as the original leaders in the church possessed vision for expansion and growth.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:9:

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me and there are many adversaries."

As God's man captures God's vision, God's people should follow (1 Cor. 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:6; Acts 8:29; 11:12). This seems to be a Scriptural established pattern.

John Maxwell

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.”

However, we must remember that if vision is going to be owned by the people, it has to be more than something a preacher talks them into. God must burn the same vision upon their heart. With this in mind, let us not lose sight of the basic vision that we should have for church ministry and expansion (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 8:4). God wants to bless our church ministries as we launch out into the deep by faith and expect a great catch! Are we ready to cast our nets over the side of the boat and see the blessing of the Lord?

The prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:10 should be ours:

“And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.”

We must truly want and long for the blessing more than anything else! There must be some “Oh” in our prayers and our prayers should be for providential progress or expansion (“enlarge my coast”), providential provision (“that thine hand might be with me”), and providential protection (“that thou wouldest keep me from evil”). If we are going to have vision and pray for God’s blessing, then these three prayer ingredients should be part of our time of praying. Only as God brings the progress, provision, and necessary protection can we move forward with His blessing. But let us remember that prayer moves the hand that moves the world!

In the year 1870 the Methodists in Indiana were having their annual conference. At one point, the president of the college where they were meeting said, "I think we live in a very exciting age." The presiding bishop said, "What do you see?" The college president responded, "I believe we are coming into a time of great inventions. I believe, for example, that men will fly through the air like birds." The Bishop said, "This is heresy! The Bible says that flight is reserved for the angels. We will have no such talk here." After the conference, the bishop, whose name was Wright, went home to his two small sons, Wilbur and Orville. And you know what they did to their father's

vision? The Wright brothers were the two Americans who are generally credited with inventing and building the world's first successful airplane.

Friend, church members must get together and support a vision for reaching out to a world without Christ and wanting to see their church ministry grow and witness God's true blessing. Let's go flying! Vision will take a church to the heights of God's blessing. If we remember that God builds the house, if we will believe God for the harvest, fervently pray to God, and give to God's work, then the blessing will come and God's people will be part of something that is truly great and wonderful.