

How Good is Our Vision?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from material by Gary Henry)

Introduction:

- A. Prov. 29:18 - "Where there is no vision, the people perish"
 - 1. Any successful endeavor requires vision
 - 2. Literally means the ability to see things that are visible, but it also used to mean the ability to see things not discernible to the eye
 - 3. "Unusual competence in discernment or perception; intelligent foresight" (American Heritage Dictionary)
 - 4. "Vision is the art of seeing things invisible" (Jonathan Swift)
 - 5. Nations and businesses must have people with vision to succeed
 - 6. Prosperity does not come just because people think they are entitled to it; it comes when people envision prosperity and work to achieve it
- B. This is absolutely the case in local congregations doing the Lord's work
 - 1. The common vision for local churches:
 - a. A paid for attractive church building with comfortable pews and good temperature control
 - b. Plenty of paved parking near the building
 - c. A clearly visible sign that includes the service schedule
 - d. And just because the sign says Church of Christ, people are going to come into the nice building, hear some canned sermon with the plan of salvation at the end preached by brother Adequate, and they will come tearing down the aisle during the invitation song to be baptized
 - 2. And in 15 to 20 years, they will be closing the doors to that building wondering why the local church died out
 - a. Building, parking, sign, preacher, etc. are to the future of the local church, just like table, chairs, plates, cups, and forks are to a fine meal.
 - b. What will be eaten, how will it be prepared, who planned it, who cooked it, who served it, who is sitting at the table? These things make the meal
 - c. What will be taught, how will it be taught, who will plan the teaching, who will do the teaching, who will come and listen to the teaching, who will prepare the teachers, how will they be prepared, who will bring the guests, how will we bring the guests? These things make a local church
 - d. Now, what do we hope to do for the future? "Save souls." How do you see yourself accomplishing this? What are you going to do to bring about your vision?
- C. In the Lord's work, we desperately need a greater vision for the future of TR
 - 1. We need greater objectives (what can be done) and specific plans (how it can be done)
 - 2. Jesus' vision - Matt. 9:36-38; John 4:35

I. POOR VISION

- A. Most churches have “Jesholdinarown Syndrome” and are content to just keep the doors open, hoping people will come in and ask to be baptized
 - 1. Of the ones who have some vision for the future, often their vision is too small or too general.
 - 2. “We want to reach as many people with the gospel as possible.”
 - 3. Sounds good at first hearing, but there are two things wrong with it:
 - a. Too general; no plan, no specific course of action
 - b. Too small; non-specific goals lead to contentment with mediocre efforts and results
- B. Vision that is too general
 - 1. For example, it is fine to plan:
 - a. To go to heaven
 - b. To serve the Lord faithfully
 - c. To do the work of evangelism
 - 2. But how will you do those things?
 - a. By what means will you get those results?
 - b. What specific, measurable actions will take you there?
 - c. How much time, effort, and money will it take?
- C. Vision that is too small
 - 1. Past failures impact present vision and future effort
 - a. Personal efforts unfruitful
 - b. Influenced by defeatist brethren
 - c. Believe that people are not interested in spiritual matters
 - 2. Many churches and individuals seem content with just keeping house for the Lord; occasional conversions, usually involving family
 - 3. With limited vision, little is done and therefore little is accomplished
- D. The Lord intends greater things for local churches
 - 1. Matt. 13:31-33; 1Cor. 16:8-9; Rev. 3:8
 - 2. Do we think He will be happy with Jesholdinarown?

II. GOOD VISION

- A. Our vision needs to be greater and more specific
 - 1. To fill every pew in five years by every member bringing one visitor per month
 - 2. Challenging, yet reachable goal, reasonable time, workable plan
 - 3. Records from across the spectrum of religious organizations: Invite two people a week; by the end of the year the inviter will have a least one person attending regularly and committed to the church
 - 4. Provide transportation to people who can't drive and for those who are uncomfortable going to a strange place alone.
 - 5. What sacrifices are you willing to make when weighed against value of a soul? - Matt. 16:26
 - 6. 100 people inviting someone every month means that by the end of the year, 1200 will have been invited; some will respond
 - 7. How does that compare to the past year?

- B. Our vision needs faith
 - 1. Faith in the power of the gospel - Rom. 1:16-17; 1Peter 1:22-25
 - 2. Faith in the power of the Lord - Phil. 4:13; Eph. 3:16, 20
- C. Our vision needs courage
 - 1. A virtue displayed by early Christians - Acts 4:13; 13:46; 19:8; 28:31
 - 2. For which they prayed - Acts 4:29; Eph. 6:18-20
 - 3. Based on our hope in Christ - 2Cor. 3:12; 1Thes. 2:2
- D. Our vision needs tenacity - Gal. 6:9; 1Cor. 15:58
 - 1. Many visions are never realized because people give up too soon

Conclusion:

- A. Not all vision is good; some have tunnel vision, focusing on small and often insignificant matters in the church
 - 1. Some have despairing visions, seeing only the negative
- B. "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest" (John 4:35).
 - 1. This was said by someone who never baptized a single convert; He saw far ahead to those who would, and prepared the way for them