

CATCH THE VISION

GETTING GOD'S VISION FOR YOUR LIFE



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CATCH THE VISION:

Getting God's Vision For Your Life

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Introduction

God has given a vision for His Church. The Church, God's House, has been likened by many writers to a lighthouse. The word "lighthouse" has different meanings, and paints a unique picture. It speaks most literally of a beacon light that will lead people to a place of safety. More spiritually, it will guide God's people in the direction that they should walk for the fulfillment of their lives. The Church of Jesus Christ has been established as a beacon light in the local community, showing the world the way to God's Kingdom.

Beacon lights are crucial since we live in a very broken, disturbed world. There are people all around us in our respective communities who are desperate to have what believers have residing in their hearts: the knowledge and the love of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not one unsaved human being on earth who, if he could exchange hearts with you, would ever give your heart back. Your heart is filled with the love, purpose, and vision of God. It *is* a lighthouse.

Also, the Church has been called into existence to be a hospital. Hospitals repair, restore the broken, and mend those who have been hurt or bruised, whether their injury was caused by their own stupidity, or by an "accident" of life. Most of us did not choose the families we were born into or the circumstances in which we were raised. We certainly didn't choose our society. This world is filled with people who are desperately needing repair, restoration, and reconciliation. A hospital is designed in the natural world for this purpose. Good medicine tries to get people back on their feet as quickly as possible. A hospital is not a place for long

term care; it is designed to get patients healed and back out into the real world where they can resume a normal life.

This booklet has been written to relate how to get a vision; not only the vision concerning your House (church), but a vision for your personal house and for your life. The book seeks to answer the question, “what we must do to get a vision from God?” I believe without a shadow of a doubt that if one does not have a vision for his life, he will aimlessly wander and will never fulfill his destiny in the Lord.

Chapter 1

The Prophet's Vision

In Habakkuk 2:1-3 we read:

I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me and how I may reply when I am reproved. Then the Lord answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal; it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it, for it will certainly come, it will not delay." (Habakkuk 2:1-3).

Today we are coming to the end of many things. In the past, most of us thought 1995 would never come. The year 2000 is soon to be upon us. We do not know how many years we have before we see the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an urgency in our spirits. Every place I go I hear the same basic statement: "We must hurry! We must work toward reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ while it's daytime, while we have opportunity." Infused throughout our many plans for reaching the harvest field by the year 2000 is that sense of urgency. It moves and drives us.

Many of us in this end time and season are experiencing tremendous difficulty in various areas of our lives. I believe this is absolutely necessary for the church. The church has always experienced great trials and tribulations. During the past few decades these trials and tribulations seem to have

been multiplied and intensified. These have been times of pruning. We are being clipped here and there in preparation for what God intends to do with us. God is preparing His church for something greater. If we are bearing fruit, God prunes us so we will bear more fruit and eventually much fruit. It has always been God's intention to see His children bear fruit that will remain, both in the natural and the spiritual.

It is never encouraging when you are in the middle of the pruning process. We have a little dog. I do not even know her breed, but I know her name—it is “Ginger.” Ginger is my wife's dog. This dog is precious to my wife, yet has limited purpose. It occupies space and costs me money, but beyond that, she is a fairly good dog. During the year she needs our help to keep from looking like a ragamuffin. Ginger must be taken to be clipped and pared back until she looks nearly naked. Every time the dog comes back from the groomer's, it looks exceedingly ugly (in my opinion at least). I may have thought it looked ugly before, but then it looks even uglier! Yet after a few days she begins to look quite beautiful. What happens in our lives is very similar.

God, through unique circumstances, brings into our lives the necessary “heat” to melt away that which displeases Him in preparation for greater blessings. We often need God's pruning and clipping as part of our preparation.

The Church is also going through times of great spiritual warfare. There has been a tremendous emphasis lately on warfare prayer. Many are shouting, “We're going to tear down strongholds, *halleluuuuujah!*” And we pray, pray, pray. Glory to God! It's important to pray. Most Pentecostals love yelling at the Devil. I'm not sure how effective it always is, but it makes us feel good!

Warfare has been going on since the beginning of time, of course. God is preparing us, maturing the church, and readying us for something greater. All across the country there is a sense that God is about to do something greater!

The world senses this as well. It is hungry and thirsty. People have heard the rhetoric of politicians and preachers. They have heard all of the talk and hype, both within the church and without.

The world is sick and tired of being sick and tired. The world is tired of preachers that preach it but do not live it. They are sick of the hypocrisy of any Christian who fits into that category as well! The world is sick and tired of a hearing a message with no power.

What the world **is** looking for is a fresh vision, a prophetic word, with prophetic insight for the present day, but they do not know where to look. They are dialing up the “1-900-No-Brain-Psychic,” hot line looking for a word from God or some type of an answer to their problems.

These phony “psychics” can be seen every night on television. Every one seems to have his own personal psychic, and it is not just in California. They are just the ones making the money on it.

The world is looking for answers, for a fresh vision. I believe God is going to provide a vision to the world and **is** bringing His vision to His Church. The world is looking for people who are truly committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is looking also, for men and women who are truly committed to God, without shame, pretense, or apology.

If we could gather the fresh vision that God is trying to give to his church today, we would be a transformed people. So why **don't** we get it? Perhaps we just don't know how. Finding a fresh vision from the Holy Spirit is essential to this next great (and perhaps final?) move of God.

Chapter 2

What is Vision?

What exactly is a spiritual vision? Literally, a spiritual vision is nothing more or less than being able to see what God sees and being able to see things God's way. It is having God's knowledge about something prior to the events that are about to happen. Seeing or having a vision is part of our heritage as the Body of Christ. All of us as believers should have a clear vision of what God is doing and what He is going to do. We should be hearing the vision from our pulpits on a regular basis and encouraging one another with that vision.

A spiritual vision is always necessary to avoid continual wandering in the wilderness and thus not seeing the fulfillment of God's plan. A vision is especially important in these "last days." A vision is, simply put, what God wants us to know in a time and a season so that we can participate in His plans and purposes. We need that, we must have that, and in fact, since it is our inheritance to have it, we should never allow ourselves to live without it.

Many people try to describe a vision as: "Well, you know, I saw this in the Spirit, I saw that in the Spirit." I believe people do see and hear things, hear the voice of God, and experience supernatural phenomena. But generally speaking, the vision that God gives clearly lines up with His Word, first, and second, He primarily gives the vision through His chosen leaders. You may not like this statement, but it is nonetheless true. God primarily speaks through the ones He has chosen to lead in a House because they have a relationship with Him that He trusts! He has invested in that leader and speaks through that leader so that we might find

safety when we follow the voice of God that is spoken through His chosen leader.

Let me also explain what a vision is not. A vision is not just an idea. A lot of people have ideas. Everybody has opinions. In fact, everyone knows why a person behaves in a certain fashion. Everybody is an amateur psychologist. I know why sister so-and-so is doing what she is doing, as though somehow I have great training, insight, and wisdom. The truth is, we are all rather ignorant in these matters. When it comes to some one else's heart, we do not have insight unless provided by the Holy Spirit and His gifts. But we love to assume and we revel in talking about it.

Many people have ideas on the way the church is supposed to be. Many have ideas for the way a ministry is supposed to flow, the kind of preaching that should come from the pulpit, or the running of the Sunday School and other ministries.

Everyone has opinions, but nobody has a real clue because they rarely have the big picture, because we are not usually responsible for the big picture.

There are people who **are responsible for the “big picture,”** and they are the ones who are to have the insight! They are the ones constantly grappling among themselves, and the Lord to know exactly the direction God wants His Church to go. People have ideas. They have always had ideas, however, that is not a vision.

A vision is not an advertising slogan. “Coke is it!” I would prefer Pepsi myself, but if you like Coke, that is fine! It is a nice slogan. “We’re the Pepsi generation!” “We’re the church in the middle of nowhere doing something for God.” They are slogans. Advertising is not a vision, it is a jingle used to draw people to a church. It has nothing to do with vision.

A vision is not just a desire. We all have desires. Oftentimes the things that we desire stand in the way of the vision that God would like to give to us. Often He has to move our desires out of the way so that He can wedge a word in edgewise. It's not just a desire.

A vision is certainly not a program. Many programs are designed to **manipulate** people to do things that they do not want to do. I do not believe God is in those kinds of programs. There are all kinds of ways we try to “con” people into church, or “con” them into doing work.

When I was first saved, the pastor threw me out of his office. He said, “I’m tired of you asking me for things to do!” “But Pastor,” I said, “I want to be like you!” I did not know what that meant at the time.

I found out later he was rather a “fuddy-duddy.” He was a terribly conservative holiness preacher who didn’t believe in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, he believed that “tongue-talking” was of the Devil!

I did not care — I loved him. He was the one who led me to Jesus, and because I had received Christ, I did not need a motivator. I did not need somebody begging me to help, to serve, or to do things. All I wanted was a chance to do **anything**, and I would be happy. I was even willing to clean toilets. Though I was a willing servant and able to help in any program, I did not have a vision.

Vision is not just a program. In fact, I honestly believe there are a lot of programs that ought to be done away with because they do nothing more than keep somebody else’s dead vision alive. They may have had a purpose at one time, but they no longer do. If a program does not flow from a vision, it will eventually become a dead work, of which we are to repent:

“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God” (Hebrews 6:1).

When God gives a vision, He also gives **provision**. When God gives a vision, it so burns within your spirit that you cannot avoid its impact. It moves and changes you. It so enraptures you that you cannot help but do what that vision drives you to do. God does not want us to seek programs, personalities or any other “things,” but we must seek Him and His heart, to receive the vision He intends for our lives.

Chapter 3

A Personal Vision

At sixteen years of age I had already received a call of God upon my life. In a church camp God spoke to me through the preaching of a missionary. He gave us a challenge for full time service and I felt a clear warming in my heart and in my spirit. I knew God's hand was upon my life, but I didn't know the direction. God did provide to me an interesting statement. He indicated that I would not have a typical pulpit ministry. God knows that it has not been!

So it was that at age sixteen, I entered a time of prayer, and God began to speak to me about my future. He showed me a picture of a tripod. I looked at that tripod in my mind's eye, meditated on it for days on end, and yet had no idea what it meant. As I began to think and pray about it, I realized that when all the legs of the tripod were in proper balance, there was strength. If one leg is removed, the tripod, including that which it is supporting, falls over. I began to inquire of the Lord as to the meaning of this picture.

God began to declare to me that in any Church Body there are three primary legs or components for insuring stability. The most important leg is the worship center, or the local church itself. Everything in terms of the Kingdom of God revolves around God's earthly expression, the local church. But connected to that part are the companion legs, one for healing or restoration and one for training and teaching.

God began to explain to me that His body was broken, bruised, and damaged. It needed to be healed and restored before He would return.

Further, since the third leg was representative of training, education, and development, of the equipping of God's people, this function had to be a part of the local assembly for strength and fulfillment. God put that in my spirit at sixteen.

I did not know what to do with this vision, but I could not, and have never been able to shake it. As I grew in the Lord, a concept began to grow in my mind and heart: God wants model churches around the world with all three legs fully functional! He wants churches filled with power, with centers for healing and training, and which are filled with the glory of God through worship, praise, and dynamic preaching. That is what God wants in His body! This vision became a consuming passion. I tried to resist its power. I went into the U.S. Army and still could not help seeing this vision from the Lord. The vision that God gave so changed me that I am no longer satisfied in any aspect of my life unless I'm flowing in and towards that vision. God desires for all of our lives a vision that motivates us and makes us nuts! I mean crazy, loony, out of it, gone, history! I can certify that! It drives you crazy when you have a vision from the Lord! Crazy for Jesus!

Chapter 4

The Direction of Vision

A vision will always have direction. It can move us in several ways. Let us briefly explore the directions of vision.

A vision can have a backwards direction. Lot's wife had a vision.

“But his wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt” (Genesis 19:26 NASB).

It was a backwards vision. She had a backwards focus of her life in spite of what God had said to her. She still had the desires for the old life and the old world, a focus and drive for what was behind her.

I believe it is very important if we are going to receive a vision from God that we lay aside anything that is old. We need to allow God to sweep away all the dead wood from our past by His Holy Spirit. There are many Christians that are bound up in guilt, shame, and anxiety. God wants to sweep it all away.

Others in the body of Christ have had at one time what they believed was and may well have been a vision from the Lord. At least it was a dream, a Holy Spirit inspired dream which occurred many years before and perhaps never came to pass. So often we hold on to these things instead of allowing them to die so that God can resurrect in us something new and fresh.

If you failed God or failed yourself, or mankind in the past, so what! Join the club. Who hasn't failed? Who hasn't sinned? Who hasn't missed the mark? Haven't we all failed in one way or another? Yet God is gracious and merciful. He wants us to make sure that our vision is moving in the right

direction. No offense to the founder of your church, but the fullness of his vision may be somewhat irrelevant for today. He may have started it, but if he is no longer pastor, then the vision must be changed. There is a new vision. There will always be new visions. There will always be additions to the vision that God gives because God is always breathing fresh revelation into a House. I believe we need to honor those who have gone before us. We bless them and care about them for they deserve to be honored. But at the same time, when it is time to move forward, we must move on without holding on to the past or to old baggage. We must move ahead as God gives us strength.

Many people have a downward vision, such as the brief look of the Apostle Peter.

And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

(Matthew 14:29-30).

Peter stepped out of a boat. We do not want to criticize Peter too much. After all, he did walk on water. Most of us have not gotten to that place yet! He stepped out of the boat and began to walk toward his Master. But when he saw the circumstances of his life, the waves, and all that was going on around him, he took his eyes off the Master and looked down.

When you take your eyes off the Master you're headed for disaster! Peter was wise enough to cry out for help when he began to sink. May we be so wise as to be willing to cry out to God and to one another when we're beginning to get over our heads in a situation. So often the difficulties of life lead us to depression and despair, when God wants us to continue to have a Christ-ward vision.

Moses raised up the serpent in the wilderness:

“And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived” (Numbers 21:9 NASB).

The children of Israel who looked on the bronze serpent when they were bitten by a serpent, lived. We live as long as we look upon the crucified Christ who is risen for us. We continue to live and grow as long as we keep our eyes on the vision that God has given to us.

Every day I take out my Bible. I have written in the front of my Bible the vision that we have for our ministry and the goals that we have for this year. As I review them, I pray over them. I frequently ask my staff, “Are you aware of what our vision is?” They say, “Yeah, we know what the vision is. OK, thank you for sharing it with us.” They get a little tired of it, but I don’t care! It is the vision to which God has called us and we are believing Him to fulfill it. Our focus must remain upon that God-given vision! Regardless of what (if any) vision we have previously had, or the direction we have taken, God continues to provide His voice and vision to His people.

Chapter 5

Steps To A Vision

How do we get a vision? Let us look at the steps, found in God's Word, for accomplishing a vision. We will look again at the verses previously cited in Habakkuk. In them we see the prophet's responsibility and the prophet's response. We also see God's responsibility and His response:

I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me and how I may reply when I am reprovved.

Then the Lord answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run.

For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal; it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it, for it will certainly come, it will not delay." (Habakkuk 2:1-3 NASB).

In verse one we see that there must be a *will to stand*. Just prior to this part of the passage, the prophet had been complaining vehemently to God. "*Why do You allow everything to go wrong, God? Where are You, by the way, and when are You going to show up and take care of business the way I have so determined that You will?*"

The prophet was, of course, wise enough to understand that he did not understand. He was wise enough to know that he did not know. He had enough wisdom to realize that he had no wisdom. He had enough knowledge of the whole situation to know that he had to be seeing things incorrectly. He did not understand the big picture.

Only God has the full picture. He gives it in part, little by little, as we are ready to receive it. But the prophet at least knew to stand, and he knew that he must stand where God had placed him. I believe with all my heart that we will never receive a vision as long as we are a wandering gypsy. Gypsies don't have visions. You've got to stay in a place long enough for God to speak to your heart. The prophet understood this. He determined, "*I will stand.*" It literally means to fix oneself in one place. He stood, not just anywhere, but on his *watch*. His place was on the rampart, the place where God had put him. He understood that as a prophet, a man of God, he belonged in God's house. He knew that if he would stand and wait, he would be in a position for God to speak to him.

Of course, when you determine to stand in order to receive from the Lord, all hell will break loose! Please understand that. You must understand that! As people began to distract the prophet—I am speaking hypothetically and allegorically—he just pushed them away.

"I am fixed. My mind and my eyes are fixed. I am waiting to see what God will speak to me."

He understood that he wasn't going to see something in the natural, he was going to see something in the spiritual. God was going to speak something to him in a way that he could see it, grab it, understand it, and embrace it.

Habakkuk also said he would stand his watch to see what God would speak to him, and how he may be reproofed. He understood, and we need to understand that we are not the most brilliant people on earth. We do not know everything! Please realize that your pastor does not know everything. If you are wise, you are going to recognize that you also need to stand in your place for reproof. I don't mean be a stick-in-the-mud. Stand in the place that God has placed you so that your

ears can be open and your eyes fixed on Jesus. Keep your eyes fixed straight ahead.

Do not look at your circumstances, neighbors, or situations. Fix your eyes so that you might see clearly, so that when He does speak, you may be corrected, reprovved and brought back into conformity, useful for the Kingdom of God.

Habakkuk had to stop, wait, and see what God was going to speak to him, to consider how to receive and respond to the instruction and rebuke that would inevitably come.

Then the Word says that Habakkuk was to record the vision, to write it on tablets and make a permanent record of it. When you write something down, you commit your life to it. Every business man understands this principle. You have got to write things down. If God has placed you in an area of responsibility in a ministry, then you know you must have goals for the vision, as well as plans and purposes, and you must write them down.

Many people have said, “Why do we need to write things down? God didn’t write anything down. If God didn’t need to write stuff down and commit Himself to it, why should we?” Excuse me; He wrote it **all** down!

Unfortunately, in the Body of Christ, we do not like to record our beliefs because our word is not always our bond. It is not always true. At times in the church we give our word glibly. So easily we simply say, “Oh, I’ll do this and I’ll do that.” But we are only saying it as people-pleasers but not to actually commit to anything. God wants us to be willing to write His plan down, record it, and begin to proclaim it. The idea is to do more than just write it down, but to also become doers of it. Remember what the Apostle James says:

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves (James 1:22).

God wants us to learn how to communicate the vision so that others will hear it and begin to perform it, proclaim it, and run with it.

Many people in a local church may know the vision of the House quite well. They could probably recite it. They understand the vision for their community. they understand their area of service. they even pray for all these areas of ministry. They understand the vision. They understand that it was born by the Holy Spirit. They know they can help and assist in the fulfillment of that vision. But so often they are not willing to step out to help or try. Why is that? Because they have not experienced the vision themselves at the same depth that the leaders of our House have experienced it.

Let me say that a different way. Part of the problem is that we, the leaders, have not communicated the urgency of the vision with enough clarity. If we have not proclaimed it with anointing, power, and desire, then perhaps we have not done **our** job. It is not necessarily that God's people do not have open hearts to receive. Not only the leaders, but those of you who also know the vision are required when you receive it to also proclaim it. When was the last time you told somebody else, even in your church, what the vision is? When was the last time you began to breathe a positive rumor about what God is preparing to do in your House? When was the last time you began to gossip about the great things of God that are about to explode in your church, your home, your business? Have you shouted with joy in anticipation of the revival that God is bringing? When was the last time, as you read the vision statement, that you embraced that vision and prayed in your heart, "Oh, thank you, God, for this vision and this House! Infect me with it, Lord. So envelop me in this vision that it changes me forever! God, bring it to pass?"

I don't know about you, but as I look around the Church in America, I see empty seats. How do we feel about this?

Some might even say, “Well, it’s kinda nice not to have someone sittin’ too close to me. . . a lot more comfortable that way.” Americans are strange in that regard. A sanctuary in the US which could seat about 500 Americans would seat about 2,000 Africans or Asians. In virtually any other culture in the world they would be lined up and jammed in! They do not care how close they get! They just love the Word of God. They love worshipping the Lord together. We have so much we could learn from the rest of the world for they have embraced the vision of God. They proclaim it all the time, everywhere they go.

Our churches should be places that are changing the world! Your church could be that kind of church. That is what Jesus’ Church is: a world changing church. Are you aware of that? Your church can and should be a true lighthouse touching nations! In Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, people are crying out for what God has so graciously given to us. You see, the prophet set himself. He received the vision, wrote it down, and committed his life to it, because he understood the faithfulness of God.

Chapter 6

Our Great God!

What is God's responsibility? Is it all on our shoulders to know his vision so that we can fulfill our destiny in Him?

God's responsibility is to speak. Hear this: If you set yourself apart to receive a vision from God, He will give it to you. He will not fail you. He will speak into your life. He will make it loud and clear. He will proclaim it. Of course, it is always in His timing and in His way. Do not think He is going to do it the same way He has done it to somebody else, because God speaks to us all in His own unique way. He wants to keep us humble, submissive, and dependent upon Him! He can speak to us any way He chooses! He is God. He *will* speak.

I believe God is going to speak more and more over the coming weeks and months, into His House. He is going to clarify the vision and speak into our lives. He will generally use His primary method of speaking to you; using His prophet in His house. He is going to speak through the men of God that will come into the pulpit where you are.

As the people of God, if our hearts are open, we will receive a greater revelation of God's plan. We must keep our hearts open! We must prepare to receive it. He's going to speak, but not everyone will hear. Only those that have ears to hear will hear.

God promises His vision will come to pass. When I visit a local church I cannot help but see the church filled with men and women hungrily seeking God. There is a desperate need to build for the Kingdom. I see leaders crawling over each other trying to figure out how they are going to accommodate

the needs of the people as revival breaks forth. I cannot help but see this. Why? Because it is part of the vision that God has spoken. When God speaks to His Church He has every intention of bringing it to pass.

Oftentimes, if a generation refuses to act upon a prophetic word, God will withhold action until another generation is raised up. I am believing God that this generation will not miss its time of visitation. I am confident that we will hear His voice, that we will embrace the vision God has given, and that we will proclaim it to everyone who listens! Thus, we will see it come to pass. If we do not embrace our responsibility, the mantle will pass, but God will never forget what He's spoken. In every community, God will develop a great ministry. I believe He wants to develop His Kingdom in every city. We need to embrace this, for God is still faithful to His Word no matter what we might see. He will bring His vision to pass. God wraps His life and spirit in the vision that He gives. It has an energy. It will come to pass in God's timing. It literally hastens toward the goal, and will not be hindered.

Chapter 7

Your Vision

What is **your** goal? What is **your** mission? If you have no other mission, at least embrace Matthew 28, the great commission.

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:16-20).

If you cannot get any other vision, get a heart for souls. Focus on the nations. Whatever you do, **GET SOMETHING!** Do not wait. You have got to have it. You cannot live without it. God is going to bring that goal, mission, and vision to pass. Do not think for a moment that God will pass you by if you stay faithful. He will use you and bring about that vision. He is going to make it happen. For many, if you will set yourself, watch, and have your heart open to receive, God will bring correction and a clear vision; one which will take us out of our comfort zone into a place of godly rest.

I hope that makes the complacent feel uncom-fortable.

You need a vision, but you do not need a strange vision. You may have a vision for your church as a lighthouse and as a hospital. You might ask, "So what am I supposed to do?"

Either be a part of a lighthouse, or be a part of a hospital. That's all.

“Well, I'm not sure in what area I am supposed to serve.”

Well, if you need to, change the bedpans. There are many hospital jobs and much responsibility. You may not be the chief surgeon—most likely you won't be. Nor will you be the hospital administrator. You will probably never even get paid for your work. So what? You are part of God's staff. You are part of His hospital. You are part of God's plan and vision.

You may not be an evangelist who is bringing forth the light of the lighthouse. So what? Be something. A lighthouse needs cleaning. Light bulbs need changing. Do whatever you have within your current ability to do, because God will then, of course, stretch you. He will expand you, for you are part of God's team.

Step into a place of service. Once you do and you are functioning in it with gladness of heart, with the heart of God, and with the love of God, you will be fulfilled. If you work with love in your heart for your brothers and sisters, if you are quick to forgive, and quick to change, you will be more fulfilled than you could ever dream. You will be a happy camper. And you will not be a pain in the posterior to anybody else in the House. Embrace the vision that God has given, ask your leaders to help you find your place of service, and go for it!

A Final Thought

How do you revive the vision in your heart? It is so simple; just open your mouth and speak. Talk about it.

Do you believe that revival is on its way to your city? Then tell somebody about it during the week. Talk on the

phone. Call your friends as well as your enemies and tell them all about the vision. Tell them what God is doing.

“God is getting ready to pour out His Spirit. God’s moving in His gifts. God’s moving in power. God’s reaching this community for Jesus!

Oh, and we are planting an inner-city church down the road. It’s going to be an exciting program! We’re going to be partners with others throughout the city, and oh, by the way, you know what our church is going to do? We’re going to have some of the greatest praise and worship you’ve ever heard in your life.

I tell you the glory of God is just going to manifest His glory in this house! You’ve got to be here, it’s going to be incredible! Come on!”

Can you hear what I am saying, Church? You have got to “sell it,” if you will! You have got to embrace the vision until it becomes yours.

There is a vision for your House and for your life but you will never really embrace it until you set yourself and get ready to receive it. Allow yourself to be corrected. Allow God to change you. Allow God to remold you. Be ready to respond when God speaks to you. And what will be your answer? **“Yes!”** That is all. There is no other answer to give, except **“Yes,”** and **“I’m sorry, Lord,”** and **“OK,”** and **“Fine,”** and **“Whatever You want.”** Respond! Respond as God will have you and you will see the vision become a reality. Then He will give you more vision.

Chapter 8

Seven Steps To God's Commissioning: A Special Word For Those Called Of God

All of us are called of God. However, not all are called to five-fold ministry or eldership in a local assembly. For those who sense God's good hand upon them for full-time ministry, there are seven steps from God's call to His release into His plan for their lives. This can be seen in the life of the great messianic prophet Isaiah, as found in Isaiah 6:

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. And he touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' Make the hearts of this

people insensitive; their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.” Then I said, “Lord, how long,?” And He answered: “Until the cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people, and the land is utterly desolate, The LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.” Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, and it will again be subject to burning, like the terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled, the holy seed is in its stump” (Isaiah 6:1-13).

Let us break down this passage into helpful bites and digest them slowly and completely.

Awareness Of The Almighty

The first step or component to Isaiah’s profound vision was an awareness of God. He became aware of God in His loftiest state, not as a suffering Savior but exalted in glory. When we become aware of the greatness and majesty of our God as the sole Person of our worship, we become positioned to hear His Word to us.

Awe Of His Holiness

Along with God’s total love for His creation is His attribute of complete Holiness. God is without rival in His greatness, and all beings are filthy compared to His Holiness. We need to learn about the love of God, for it is through His love as demonstrated through Christ crucified and risen that we are able to approach God’s throne. Yet for those called of

God to effective Kingdom service, we must acknowledge His Holiness and the awesome power of His voice. His holiness is what we must desire and seek after as we approach our wonderful Lord.

Acknowledgment Of Our Sinfulness

Upon setting his eyes on God in His glory, Isaiah became thoroughly aware of how utterly filthy he was in comparison. His exclamation, “*I am ruined!*” came as He beheld God in His awesome holiness. He recognized that he was unworthy of God’s glory and unable to be a spokesman for God. As servants of God, we should always remember where we have come from and how wonderful is the grace and mercy of God. No man is worthy in himself to approach God, nor is any woman pure enough to warrant God’s favor. It is only because of the efficacious blood of Jesus Christ that “*we live, move, and have our being*” (Acts 17:28). The great prophet, prior to his call, comes face to face with his own condition of sin. He felt his unworthiness to approach God. This time of crisis, of utter despair in oneself, seems to be necessary for anyone truly called to the high calling of full-time service. No arrogant, self-aggrandizing person can stand before the one and true God. True humility which leads to pure ministry is essential for true vision to be manifested. It is only when we are at the end of ourselves that God can invest in us His precious plans for our generation.

Acceptance Of Cleansing

In the religious system in which I was raised we were continuously reminded of our unclean lips, which flow from

an unclean heart. Of course, we freely talked about our great salvation, our cleansing through Christ's blood. Yet, the receiving of His cleansing at an experiential level was generally missing. We were always returning to the altar for a "second touch," "deeper commitment," "fresh fire" and the like. We remained forever stuck between a state of anxious anticipation and longing desperation, hoping that our "purification" would come.

The prophet Isaiah had his lips touched with a burning coal from the altar of God's throne. That touch of coal to his lips took away (corrected) his iniquity (perversity, bent towards continual moral depravity), and marked the forgiveness of his sin (offenses, missing the mark). If such powerful transformation of character and forgiveness of specific sins was available to Isaiah under the Old Covenant, how much more now for us under the New.

As we confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as our supreme Lord, accepting His sacrifice for sins, and believe in our heart that God raised Christ from the dead, we are saved (Romans 10:9-10). No matter how unworthy we are and how filthy or perverse, Christ is the Victor and we His benefactors. We dare do nothing except fully receive and accept His cleansing as complete, absolute and continual. We must accept His forgiveness and walk in His worthiness, lest our past perversity and faithlessness be a weapon in the enemy's hand to keep us from our destiny.

Recognize His Voice

Once we have responded to His cleansing and are aware of our imparted righteousness, we are privy to the "private"

conversations of the throne room, even as the writer of the Hebrews proclaims:

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace [the same throne Isaiah saw], that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need”

(Hebrews 4:14-16).

The prophet had the right to enter into the throne room and hear the Word of the Lord because his lips were clean and his sins forgiven. We also can come with confidence (assurance, boldness) into the presence of God, with an understanding that God’s mercy and grace are available to us. God’s Words to the prophet are similar to all who are called of God, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* Once we have received the freedom of His cleansing and the in-filling of His presence (glory), we are in a position to hear His voice. Yet His message never changes; *Who will I send, who will go?*

God is looking for men and women who have pressed into His presence, received His cleansing, and desire His hand upon their lives. Of course, all believers are called; unto Christ, His church, for service, and to the lost. Yet some are called to greater responsibility and accountability. If we have ears to hear, we can still hear His call today.

Respond To The Call

Notice the response of the prophet. It was neither well thought out nor impulsively made (though I highly doubt he, or any of us for that matter, fully know to what we are agreeing), but an emphatic and resounding, “*Here am I. Send me!*”

The prophet could no more have held in his passionate response than a child can restrain his or her delight at opening presents on Christmas Day! He was ready to respond, honored to be called, in awe of his great fortune, and compelled by the power of God’s presence.

Those who are called are the ones who have positively responded to God’s gracious invitation with exuberance and selfless abandon. This call is not for everyone, for the adventure which follows is not for the squeamish nor faint of heart.

Release Into Service

The period from the time of the call to the release into service is the time of preparation. Lowly Isaiah appears to have been thrust into ministry immediately, and given few positive results for which to hope. Yet, the call burned so deeply that he could not restrain himself. He **had** to serve God.

Fortunately for most of us, we have ample opportunity for training prior to our release into service. Most likely our work with God will be fruitful. Yet there are no guarantees that we will be the most successful, the most highly anointed or the one with the greatest acclaim. In fact, many people will not acknowledge or even agree with your call. However, as Jesus stated, “*Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children*” (Luke 7:35). The proof is in the pudding.

Conclusion

I am convinced that God desires His church to experience the glory of God as did Isaiah and the Apostle John. God would desire that we receive a clear view of His glorious Kingdom which is ever increasing on earth, including our part in it.

As we become increasingly aware of how mighty, awesome, and Holy God is, and become willing to repent from dead works and our sinful condition, and fully receive and experience the power of His cleansing, we **will** hear His voice and receive His vision. As we respond with a resounding “**YES!**” God will prepare us until we are released into the fullness of His plan.

May God help us all to catch His Vision—and fulfill our destiny not only for this generation but future generations as well.