

April 7, 2017

Leadership Equipping Thoughts



Prone to Forget

This is hard...why are we here again... what we had is better than this...let's go back. Less than 3 weeks after a complete routing of the mightiest nation on the face of the earth by the miraculous power of God, crossing through the walls of water in the Red sea, then watching that same water completely destroy the pursuing enemy, God's people completely lost sight of vision and were ready to abandon it (Ex 16:1-2).

How about this one? The mightiest ruler of the greatest nation personally gives you an official letter, and provision that authorizes you to go back to Jerusalem and build a wall around the city. The 52 day project begins under the leadership of Nehemiah and a short 26 days later the people wanted to quit. Opposition and difficulty came and people lost motivation and vision (Nehemiah).

There is always warfare over vision and one of the main jobs of a leader is to be the steward of the vision God gives. God's people are prone to forget vision in the midst of difficulty, busyness, distractions, and the endurance it takes to keep going. God's people are in constant need of fresh stirrings of vision. The Bible says much more about reminding people of things they are prone to forget than always trying to impress them with new revelation (2 Tim 1:6, 2:14, 4:3, 2 Pet 1:12, Jude 1:3).

C.S. Lewis, "People need to be reminded more than instructed."

Martin Luther, "Most necessary is that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually."

Celebrating God's vision

What was an important thing the 12 disciples got from Jesus? Of course we would immediately think "eternal life" which is obvious. There was something else that can be overlooked, a vision worth dying for (Mt 16:18-26, 28:18-19). What He showed them to pursue brought a passion that changed those men to the point that they gave their lives in pursuit of it. It also changed the world. This same passion that will change the church and the world today.

What you consistently
celebrate becomes
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The whole Bible is full of stories about God showing groups of His people things that they were to pursue in their life and their attempts to pursue it. Vision from God

is more than a catchy phrase written on a piece of paper. It is something that God desires to write on "the tablets of His people's heart" (2 Cor 3:3). This evokes a heart passion to pursue it which stimulates faith and action. Vision ends up being something you cannot not do. Caleb expressed it well, "we must by all means go up and take possession of it" (Num 11:30).

One important thing that we should not miss when it comes to vision in any culture is the reality that what you consistently celebrate becomes what resonates in the heart desires of people. God wove annual festivals into Israel's culture to commemorate important events, identities, and callings God had for them. They were important things that stimulated and reinforced vision.

Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest had a similar element in their culture called Totem Poles. Some of the main functions of Totem Poles was to help reinforce the culture of the tribes by recounted legends, people, notable events, and cultural beliefs. This helped reinforce and create desire for their culture. It is much like what happens in the annual state of the union address which the president gives on national television. He usually has a few people there who have done something special that highlights the "spirit of America" or the values that particular president wants the nation to emulate.

Things leaders can do to walk in celebration and communication of vision.

- **Passionate, Spirit inspired communication about what God has revealed.** If it doesn't move us it will be hard to move others.
- **Ask God to train our eye to see and celebrate examples of God's vision being lived out among His people.** When you see examples of His vision being lived out among His people do everything you can to highlight it. Do an online post, a public honoring, or any other way to highlight it in front of God's people.
- **Point out practical steps that lead to the fulfillment of the vision.** Give examples and highlight others who have practically walked it out. We don't want intellectual theology but pavement theology.
- **Use the power of contrast when having conversations, preaching, or teaching.** Jesus was always doing this as He told stories or taught principles with lead-ins like, "you have heard it said, but I say to you" (Mt 5:1-43).
- **Pulling weeds and pruning away things that create opposing environments (culture) that should accompany His vision.** Peter Drucker reminds us that vision is useless if the actual environment undermines it, "Culture eats strategy (vision) for breakfast."
- **Leaders have the BE the vision (pursue and live the culture associated with it), as well as lead others into it.** It is hard to build what you are not living yourself with the people God gives you. Jesus lived what He was teaching among the 12 and the 70. You can come up with the catchiest slogan or the best vision statement in the world but if leaders don't live it, and sacrifice to see it become a reality, they can forget it.
- **Keep His vision in front of people.** Write aspects of the vision down in places where people can see it (Habbakuk 2:2). Bleed the vision into sermons, public messages and writings.