

## *Getting Intentional about Our Vision*

### *A Part of Our Community Emphasis*

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Text: John 4:34-38; 7:17

Thesis: We believe that the Lord has been speaking to us about becoming more intentional about our vision. That happens as we share God's heart— with him and with others.

1. *John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor (John 4:34-38).*
2. **Let's pray.**
  - a. Lord, grant to us the eyes to see. Give us awareness. Open our eyes.
  - b. Lord, grant to us the eyes of the Spirit: to perceive what you are already doing in the lives of others. The Holy Spirit is already at work. Others have already gone before us. Lord, help us to do our part.
  - c. Lord, grant to us courage. This change in lifestyle is a process. It takes courage. It takes compassion. It takes a willingness to partner with you, O Lord. So, help us to access the courage you have deposited in each of us. Amen.
3. **We believe that the Lord has been speaking to us about becoming more intentional about our vision. That happens as we share God's heart— with him and with others.**
4. **I am captured by our vision. It is the way the Lord transforms us.** It is a holistic vision. (See handout.)
  - a. **A transformed life intentionally engages a mental model of transformation.** I believe that the Lord uses all three parts of our vision to transform our lives. (Mental model: how you see the world and how you understand how the world works.)
    - i. **Intimacy: a reflective lifestyle** where we listen to God and give our word to what he is doing to redeem and restore people, systems, and institutions to their redemptive calling; **we become more aware**
    - ii. **Community: an authentic community** of shared lives that leads to shared vision; **we grow in our capacity to be authentic (open and honest)**

- iii. **Kingdom: radical obedience** which leads to a missional life (on mission with Jesus); **we get in action by taking next steps**; wherever we are **working for wholeness** is missional.
- b. Here is a problem: **We tend to compartmentalize our lives.** We live into one part of our vision. **Yet, we need all three parts of our vision to live a whole, balanced, healthy, life.**
  - i. In other words, some people tend to specialize in intimacy, community, or kingdom. **But, transformation requires intentionality in all three aspects of our vision.**
  - ii. You can't choose to work on intimacy and neglect community or kingdom. Loving God demands loving others and taking Christ to the others.
  - iii. You can't experience true Christian community unless you are learning to walk with closely with God personally and trying to walk out what God is saying to impact a broken world.
  - iv. You can't focus on extending God's kingdom without growing in your love for God first and trying to live it out together with others.
- 5. **How we listen and learn.**
  - a. Before we explore more in depth what we believe the Lord is saying to Calvary right now, I want to talk about our default way of listening and learning.
  - b. **So many times, we listen with right/ wrong or agree/ disagree thinking**
    - i. In order to learn to be different, we must do things differently. One thing we can do differently that will aid in the journey of transformation is learning to listen differently.
    - ii. Most people listen from a stance of "Is what's being said right or wrong? Do I agree or disagree with the speaker?" Or a variation on this kind of listening is, "How do I respond to this so that I look good – or at least don't look bad." It's like there is an ever-present voice in our head that is continually engaged in that kind of dialogue. There are some of you who are hearing this and you are saying, "I don't have that voice in my head." That's the voice in your head.
    - iii. In the [journey of transformation], we believe that this kind of listening makes you the judge of what the Holy Spirit might be trying to show you. It assumes that you already know everything you need to know in order to discern the Truth. Consider with us today that even for the very mature in Christ among us, there are yet things that we don't know.
    - iv. That raises the central question. "How do you know what you don't know that you don't know?" It is our assertion that a commitment to radical obedience is what gives you access to what you don't know that you don't know. We have an autopilot way of being that keeps us in a comfort zone. Even when our world

doesn't work the way we want it to, we choose the pain of familiarity over the pain of risk and adventure.

- v. When we take on radical obedience and get into acting our way into obedience, God reveals to us what we can't yet see. We believe Paul is describing this reality when he prays for the Ephesian Christians to have a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17).
  - vi. If you listen from the "right/wrong, agree/disagree" perspective, those experiences will blind you to some of what God wants to do in your life. This way of listening closes off the possibility that the Holy Spirit will give you revelation. It is our strong conviction that the agree/disagree way of listening actually stands in the way of transformation.
  - vii. In the [journey of transformation], you are being asked to trade that old way of listening for a new way in which you simply try on what you are hearing and ask, "What if this is so? What would that mean for my life in Christ? What would the impact be on my marriage or in my relationship to my parents? What would it mean for my work?" As you consider the various ways that something that is being said would play out in the arenas of your life, the Holy Spirit will work in your heart and guide you into truth (from Faithwalking 101, pages 10-11).
- c. Here is a new way to listen and learn. It is a **new tool for the journey: Try it on.**
- i. Be willing to listen to and learn something new.
  - ii. Be willing to risk.
  - iii. Be willing to practice.
  - iv. Be willing to see yourself as a learner. We don't know what we don't know. We will learn together. We will share our stories. We will ask others to pray for us regarding what gets stirred up in us, where we get stuck and stopped, where we get anxious or frustrated.
  - v. We don't want to be theoreticians. We want to be practitioners. We want to be doers of the word, not merely hearers only.
- d. **How will you know if the Lord is speaking to us at Calvary in this season to get intentional?**
- i. *Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. 17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:16-17).*
  - ii. You won't know if the Lord is speaking if you sit in judgment over what you are hearing and what we are trying to do.
  - iii. Jesus said you prove the teaching (or not) in the doing of it.
  - iv. Give it a try. Try it on. Then, let me know if you think it is the Lord or not.

6. **Hearing the voice of the Spirit through the spiritual discipline of dialogue.**
- a. I love working with our staff team. One of the spiritual practices we do is hearing the Spirit through the discipline of dialogue. It is wonderful to seek the Lord together and to share with one another corporately what we think and feel. As we do this practice, we often come to hear the voice of the Spirit through our sharing, conversation, and dialogue.
  - b. Last fall, as we prayed for the Lord's direction and as we shared together, we believe that the Lord gave us an expression of our DNA to help us to make progress in getting more intentional. We concluded that the Lord was inviting us to ask others: How can I pray for you?
    - i. It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us.
    - ii. This kingdom application would be a way to share the heart of God, to listen to the leading the Holy Spirit, and to get in action as community. We would practice doing it together and reporting back in community our experiences. This kingdom application ties all of our vision together. We would do this action together through our community emphasis.
  - c. We believe that the Lord has been speaking to us about becoming more intentional about our vision. That happens as we share God's heart— with him and with others.
  - d. **Compassion is the motivation for our kingdom action: "How can I pray for you?"**
    - i. Compassion for people: we pray and love because we share the heart of God. We care, we empathize, and we don't judge.
    - ii. Compassion is what moved Jesus to touch our lives with his healing, deliverance, salvation, and encouragement.
    - iii. **Because we have compassion, we are moved to care for people, to empathize with people, and to pray for people.**
7. **My personal story.**
- a. I have participated in **all sorts of ways of engaging people intentionally.** Door to door religious survey. Door to door evangelism. Street evangelism. Relational evangelism. Prophetic evangelism. Etc.
  - b. Last fall, I got excited when the Lord seemed to be directing us to use a question which really expresses our DNA: How can I pray for you?
  - c. A few weeks ago, I was praying for Calvary, for our community emphasis, and for our kingdom application. As I was praying, I expressed gratitude for the fact that I have grown in my present awareness of the Lord.
    - i. The discipline of awareness became a part of who I am because Pastor Steve mentored us in that spiritual discipline.
    - ii. Everywhere I go, I am listening to the Lord and I am asking the Lord what he is doing and how he wants me to pray for people. I try to be aware of, attuned to, and available to the Lord.

- iii. Then, I heard the Lord say, “Now it is time to ask people intentionally: How can I pray for you?”
    - (1) Wow. When I heard that impression, I got anxious.
    - (2) I realized this level of intentionality is outside my current comfort zone.
    - (3) In the past, I could never see me going door to door. I could never see me walking up to strangers on the street. I could never see me engaging in prophetic encounters.
    - (4) But, when I simply risked, the Lord changed me. He grew my capacity. I learned by doing. I made mistakes. I learned from my mistakes. And, the Lord changed me.
    - (5) So, I decided to try on our new kingdom application.
  - d. **I believe that our kingdom application, How can I pray for you?, is an expression of our DNA, of who we are as a congregation.**
8. **I believe the Lord wants to change us, to grow our capacity, and to develop in us a lifestyle of intentionality, both as individuals and as a community.**
- a. It is a process that happens over time as we practice.
  - b. It is a learning process.
  - c. It is a messy process. We won’t be perfect.
  - d. It is uncomfortable and inconvenient. We don’t like to be uncomfortable and inconvenienced. Yep. That is natural.
  - e. And, the Lord will be with us. And, we get to do it with others.
  - f. **What is our end goal? It is an intentional lifestyle of living missionally in community.**
    - i. Partnering with the Lord.
    - ii. Partnering with others.
    - iii. Partnering with the Lord and others intentionally.
9. **On Friday night, March 10, about 50 people gathered for our Compassion Friday Event.**
- a. We had a time of training.
  - b. We spent time in groups listening to the Lord and sharing with each other what we were hearing. We wanted to share the heart of God.
  - c. We went out to connect with others and to share the heart of God by praying for others. We asked: How can I pray for you?
  - d. Then, we came back and had a time of reporting what we learned about ourselves and what we learned about the Lord.
  - e. Each one of us was at a different place in the journey of intentionality. For some of us, just showing up was a victory. For others, seeing others with the eyes of the Lord was progress. For some, having the compassion of the Lord for others was our step of progress. And, for many of us, just taking the next step of action was a huge victory.

- f. It was fun to try it on and to share what we learned along the way. It was scary for some of us. It took lots of courage and mutual support.
  - g. And, the testimonies were so encouraging and powerful. We shared our stories for about 45 minutes when we got back to Calvary.
10. **Calvary, we have what our world is looking for and needing:**
- a. **Belonging / community.** People long to connect deeply with one another. Calvary is a place of deep, meaning relationships and connections.
  - b. **Transformation / change.** People are talking about transformation and change. The Lord is transforming us and changing us into a committed community of followers of Jesus.
  - c. **Experience / encounter.** People today are seeking experience, especially spiritual experiences. Calvary is a place of encounter with the Lord-- a portal. It is a porch where people can step into the presence of the Lord.
  - d. **Illustration:** Share about the three pastors and ministry leaders who came up to me at the Greater Houston Pastor Prayer Summit at the end of February, who shared about the impact of Calvary on their lives in the 1990's. They still see themselves as "disciples of Calvary." What the Lord did in them years ago is still bearing fruit in their lives today. They just wanted to say, "Thanks." Wow!!!
  - e. Calvary, we have a powerful vision. We believe that the Lord has been speaking to us about becoming more intentional about our vision. **I invite you to make this journey with us.**
11. **Ministry Time**
- a. Lord's Supper