Vision to Communicate

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What a privilege it is to come together and talk about such an important topic. How we can communicate the truth that we have with a world that is in great need of that truth. I’m so glad that you’re focusing some time on how you can communicate better. (Opening prayer.)

Mark Twain is a well-known communicator in the United States. He’s an author perhaps you’ve seen some of his work: Huckleberry Finn and The Adventures of Mark Twain. He said, “It takes me a half an hour to create one of those off-the-cuff remarks that people think I’m famous for.” Every day he would sit and think about how he could be witty. We might think that he was witty from birth, but he wasn’t. We might be surprised at how often good communicators have to think about and prepare how to communicate.

1. In order to achieve a vision, you must first have a vision.
   1. How do we know the will of God.
      1. As many people as I’ve asked that question to, I always get different answers.
      2. When we were looking to become part of EE, I asked many people this question, and the most common answer I got was to make a list of pros and cons.
      3. I find that incredible that we would use such a worldly method to determine God’s will.
   2. The question is where does someone get a vision?
      1. Its crazy the things you hear people say when they talk about the vision God has given them and how they got it.
      2. It really sounds like they made it up themselves
      3. None of us want to be guilty of making up a vision
   3. EE has a vision.
      1. First to glorify God in all we do.
      2. We equip people to multiply
      3. God has called you to fill a very specific function in EE. Not all of us fill the same role.
      4. It’s all very different work.
      5. God has given you a calling for your life and ministry
         1. Some people have not found that calling because they are not doing the general calling that God has told them to do now.
         2. As much as we obey his general rules, calling, and will for our lives is the degree to which he will reveal his particular will for your life.
         3. As quickly as we’re willing to jump in and do the general callings on our lives, that’s as quickly as he will begin to reveal the particular calling on our lives.
2. We’re going to look a the book of Nehemiah
   1. He was part of the exile that happened in Jerusalem.
   2. He found himself in the court of Artizerkzis
      1. Ester found herself in this place as well in the next book
   3. Were going to look at the life of Nehemiah and answer a few questions
      1. In order to achieve a vision you must first have a vision
      2. Beginning in chapter 1 (Read chapter 1)
         1. We see Nehemiah on taking some time off and having a conversation about the exile that has happened.
         2. The exile was a large chunk of time and people had been scattered all over the place but some were coming back to Jerusalem and others had been there through the entire time
            1. We see this conversation happening (verse 3-11)
   4. We’re answering the question; where is it that Nehemiah gathered his vision?
      1. Think about this question as you read through these scriptures and let the Spirit of God reveal to you when this happens.
      2. First we see that his friends came, and he has this conversation.
      3. Something grieved him mightily
      4. It was out of this grief that he began seeking and asking for the will of the Lord.
         1. How much do we fast for God to reveal his vision to us?
         2. If I’m any indication, not enough.
      5. What is it that he was willing to do?
      6. He searched through the scriptures and fasted and prayed
      7. This was an intense time for him as he sought God and found in scripture some verses that revealed the truth about the passion that he had.
      8. He was literally pounding the table saying, “Someone’s got to do something about that!”
      9. He finds these passages and starts praying back to God the scriptures.
      10. He sees that what the scriptures were saying had happened, so he’s praying back to God the very things that God had said he would do.
      11. This was a promise that God had made; “If you return to me…” So it hadn’t happened yet. “I’ll bring you back.”
      12. Nehemiah is seeing what has happened and he’s seeing the scriptures, and the Holy Spirit is illuminating to him the vision.
3. Vision comes from God – not from us.
   * 1. It’s God’s vision not ours.
        1. I get so tired of people naming ministries after themselves
        2. This was Gods vision and God chose Nehemiah to be part of it.
        3. There’s a joke that shows how someone might learn this lesson badly.
           1. There was a man who learned to make things out of dirt. He got really good at making beautiful things out of dirt. Then he had a break through and he could make energy out of dirt and from that he could make anything else. So he got rather full of himself and he went to God and said “Let’s have a contest to see who can make the best thing out of dirt.” God said, “Ok.” As the man reached down to get some dirt, God said, “Wait. Get your own dirt.”
        4. That’s the truth. No matter what we think we bring to this – no matter what we think we’re crafting, we’re crafting with God’s stuff.
        5. Remember that this is God’s vision. Youre merely asking the Lord of hosts what he would have you do. Don’t get full of yourself.
        6. The ministry of EE has done this. You can find our vision in Revelation 7:9
           1. There will be a day when every tongue, every tribe, every nation will be standing before the throne of God.
           2. We don’t have to make that up. It’s going to happen.
           3. It’s a promise of God.
           4. We can pray that back to him: “Lord it’s going to happen!”
           5. The truth is that more than half of the tribes don’t know the name of Jesus.
           6. We know from Romans 10 that the way that is going to happen is that someone is going to be sent to do that. –to evangelize them.
           7. Are we some of those that God has raised up to carry the gospel to the places that it has not been.
           8. I believe it is and I believe that God has called you into that and then he has given you a particular passion for it.
     2. So its Gods vision not yours
4. We are his servants, not his commentators.
   1. We’ve probably all watched sports so we hear those commentators talking about what’s happening and what’s going to happen.
      1. Don’t do that for God.
      2. God needs you to be his communicator as his servant – one who is delivering what the King has said.
      3. Don’t become his expert.
      4. I see this in the church all the time. An “expert” gets up to teach us all something.
      5. Lead as a servant
      6. Communicate as one that believes that those who are listening can do everything they have been called to you just as much as you can.
5. Let not your vision be novel.
   1. Sometimes the church has this idea that something is not going to work unless it’s new. We want to hear the new prophesies or the new strategies, and although that will pack out a church it is not what God said.
   2. He gave us his word and that is it!
      1. There are four ways that we can know that a vision is from God.
         1. The word of God.
            1. If the vision is not in this book it’s not God’s vision.
         2. The Holy Spirit living in us. He will speak to us in our hearts.
            1. But please understand that the Holy Spirit will never argue with this book! He came to shine a spotlight on Jesus Christ and to teach us the things in scripture.
         3. The company of Saints – wise men and women who will confirm and reveal these visions to us.
         4. Common sense.
      2. I put them in order because they do flow that way.
      3. Make sure vision is from God not from us.
      4. Make sure you’re a servant communicator
         1. Be humble.
      5. Let it not be novel.
6. The vision ought to cut you to the core.
   1. If it doesn’t make you passionate, it’s not the vision God’s given you.
   2. He’s built you to be passionate about your visions
      1. To be willing to fast and pray about what you should do
      2. This will effect others as well
   3. It’s happened so many times that I’ve received a vision that has made me passionate.
      1. I remember being in a village with 100 kids in Africa that had no parents, because their parents had all died from AIDS. They just had their grandparents. We were sharing the gospel with them and I was thinking about hell being filled up with the faces of these little kids, and it was a moment when I thought, “someone has to do something about this!” I was remembering the prayer of David Livingston for the thousands villages.
      2. They say that there are as many people on earth today as there ever have been on the earth. If there are only 1 billion Christians on earth and there are 7 billion people that don’t know Christ, that means that in our lifetime – while we’re on the job, hell will triple or quadruple the gains that will be in heaven.
      3. God can do what God can do, but I don’t know about you, but I’m not going to blame God for my lack of activity.
      4. We’re going to do everything we can to populate heaven.
      5. That’s the thing that makes me pound the table.
      6. This is what vision ought to do in our life.
      7. If it doesn’t make you pound the table, then keep looking. Keep praying.
      8. I always think its interesting when people say they’ve been called to children’s ministry but they’ve never once stepped in a children’s classroom.
         1. The passion that we have will be shown in the lives that we live every day.
7. Before you can achieve a vision, you first have to resource the vision.
   1. People have said that they wish we weren’t an organization that makes people raise their support.
      1. We did that because we wanted to have as many staff members as we have.
      2. I really believe that God uses finances to prove vision.
         1. Provision to prove vision.
         2. I believe that if God gave us a vision, he would give us the provision for it.
         3. One of the reasons people can’t raise the support for something is that they don’t have the vision from God.
         4. That doesn’t mean that it’s easy and painless.
            1. We read Philippians 4 and we understand the struggle that Paul was going through.
   2. Nehemiah chapter 2
      1. Nehemiah had to be calculated in how he was going to ask the king so that he wouldn’t loose his head.
      2. I also don’t want you to miss this: the king understood that Nehemiah was asking him for something. At this point Nehemiah offered up a quick prayer to the God of heaven.
      3. The first thing that Nehemiah asked the king for was not vacation time. It was to send him as an ambassador for the king. What an incredible ask.
      4. He already had a job for the king that had nothing to do with this job. He’s saying “let me represent you while I go do this thing which you care nothing about.”
      5. Verse 6. That’s not all he asks.
      6. Verses 7-8
         1. So we see here that God gives Nehemiah a vision and Nehemiah believes in it.
            1. There are three elements to true saving faith.

Knowledge

Agree with that knowledge

Trust in that knowledge

* + - * 1. Nehemiah had the knowledge of the vision, but more importantly, he trusted in it so much that he was willing to go raise the money he needed to do it.

When we don’t raise the money to support a vision, what are we saying? We’re saying that we don’t trust that vision.

If a vision is from God, we won’t ask questions like, “How are we going to raise the support God has asked us to do.

I have a friend in central Asia Kazakhstan named Ian, and we were talking about raising support and I asked him, “If God came to you and said, ‘You are going to raise $50,000 for the next ministry I’m going to give you.’ How would that make you feel?” I have to believe that it would encourage his heart.

There are two ways that a person can respond to that.

They can sit and wait for 50,000 to come in because God said it would come in. They can wait for it to happen.

The other thing that they can do is go and raise the money knowing full well that it will be successful. I can’t wait to go make those appointments with supporters because I know the money is coming in.

That is the level of trust that we need to have in the vision that God has given us.

We’ve got to learn something from Nehemiah and how he casts that vision and how he communicates it to these donors.

You need to be bold. He was bold in going in. It was risky for him.

You need to identify with your audience. He was able to communicate with the king clearly in a way that the king could be sure exactly what he was asking of him so he could feel good about agreeing to it.

You need to ask!

We need to expect that the answer is going to “yes”. This is the most difficult to do.

I’ve met so many people that go into it with a very negative attitude that is unsure. It’s no wonder that no one finances that vision or gives to it because they don’t believe that you believe it. If you believe it, you’re going to pound the table and you’re going to after the thing.

* 1. So make sure that the vision is from God and not you.
  2. Learn to be a servant
  3. Learn to communicate about it
  4. Do the resourcing that you need to do.

1. In order to achieve a vision, you must encourage others to work with you.
   1. None of us are going to do this alone.
   2. If we’re going to accomplish the vision, we’re going to have to learn to work and communicate with others.
      1. We communicate with God as we pray
      2. We communicate with those that will provide
      3. We need to communicate with those that will work alongside of us in order to achieve the vision that God has given us.
   3. We’re going to see this in Nehemiah chapter 2 starting in verse 16.
      1. Nehemiah had gone out to look at the wall and no one knew that he was doing that.
      2. He also understood that if he was going to get this done, he need the folks that were going to do the work.
         1. I was speaking about this passage in Japan and a young man came up to me and said, “I really appreciate some of the language that you’re using when you use words like disgrace’.” Many of us in the west don’t understand the weigh of concepts like that in the Asian culture. That was the Lord’s language not mine, but I was reminded of how wise Nehemiah was to speak to people in terms that they could understand and relate to.
         2. He could have taken a different approach. He could have said, “What’s wrong with you people?” The wall had been in ruins for 70 years. He could have said, “This is what the Lord said, why aren’t you doing it?” But that’s not what he did. He identified with them and used words like, “us”. He talked about things that mattered to them; disgrace.
   4. Verse 18
      1. Part of achieving the vision was resourcing the vision.
      2. The resourcing proved that the vision was true.
      3. They did it. They rebuilt the wall and were able to do it quickly.
   5. So in order to achieve a vision, you must encourage others to work with you.
      1. We need to identify with those that we’re going to work with
         1. We need to be co-laborers in the gospel.
         2. We do not want to be one of those generals that tell the soldiers to go out and fight the battle while we sit back at home.
         3. When you teach EE, guess who the first person is out the door to do an OJT; you.
            1. You do it because you believe that this is a vision from God. He’s provided for it, and then you encourage others to do the same so that we can say, as Christ said, “Follow me, and I’ll make you fishers of men.”
         4. I remember I was teaching a clinic in Cincinnati Ohio. We got to the third day and we were getting ready to go on OJTs in an area that white folks, like me, don’t walk around in. Most of the pastors were black and they came to me as we were on our way out and they said, “We talked about this as a group and we really don’t think it’s a good idea for you to go because, frankly, we don’t want to be sending your dead body back to your wife.” There was a part of me, like there is in most people, that thought about staying back. It’s not because I’m bold that I did it. I did it because if we’ve been called by God to do something, then we have to do it, and we have to do it first. I’ve got to tell you that the week would not have ended the same had I not gone with them that first day. There are worse ways of dying than dying doing what God has called you to do.
         5. So when he gives us a vision and provides for us to achieve that vision, and we’re out there doing it, you’ve got to go. You’ve got to lead.
      2. We’ve got to realize the power of testimony.
         1. We have great ministries down in Cuba, but there was a time when it had to start. I remember when it really started because I was driving in my car and my phone rang. I picked it up and it was a woman who said that her and her husband had been saving up for a new car, but during their morning prayer time, they felt that God was telling them that they should not use the money, but that he was going to make their car last for another year, and that they should give the money to Christian ministries. She said that she believed that the ministry they were suppose to give it to would know the exact amount down to the penny. She asked me, “What number do you have in your mind right now?” I gotta tell you, I was sweating. I thought, “Should I just start guessing numbers?” Then suddenly it dawned on me that I had received an exact amount for what it would take to start up ministries in Cuba. I don’t remember the exact number now, but it was something like, $21,865.31. I gave her that number and she dropped the phone. When she finally picked it up, she was speechless. She said, “That’s the exact number down to the penny!” I said, “Well, I think God is calling you to give it to Cuba.” She said, “Let’s give it to Cuba!” We were able to give that money to and it was a blessing to them, but it wasn’t just a blessing to them then. It was an encouragement to them all year long. The fact that God would provide so miraculously was such an encouragement to everyone.
      3. Once they received the vision in Nehemiah, they go to work and they were out of disgrace.
2. So we need to good communicators and we need to communicate what God has told us to do.
   1. How are you going to find the vision?
   2. How are you going to resource the vision?
   3. How are you going to encourage others to work with you?
      1. Study this passage again and I believe that you will learn more things that you need to know.
   4. It does lead us to some questions that I would like you to think about as you go through this chapter of this communications study. I’d like you to pray and fast to seek God and ask him what he would have you do.
   5. Here are the questions:
      1. When you think about the vision, what scriptures come to mind as the fountains of the vision that God has given you?
         1. Not just life verses. What verses has he given you? Write them down and explain how they’ve impacted you. Make sure it’s not novel. Make sure its plainly true in scripture.
      2. What sort of miraculous things has the Lord done in your life that he’s used to prepare you for the work that he’s called you to do?
         1. Write them down as you think through the things that God has done that are undeniable.
         2. When the Jordan river was dried up, the people were encouraged to stack up stones to remember the things that God had done. Where are your stacks of stones?
      3. Are you willing to fast and pray for the vision? When it the last time you fasted and prayed?
         1. This is a private thing, but I encourage you to challenge yourself in this.
         2. If what Ian Bound said is true, and prayer and faith are tied together: if we won’t pray, we don’t have faith. If we don’t have faith, what can we accomplish for God? Nothing.
         3. The bigger picture question is this; paint me a picture of what your life, the lives of those around you, and the world will look like if you are able to do all that God has called you to do. What would the world look like if you are able to do all that he has for you? That’s where the line is drawn between doing a job, and doing what God has called you to do. Do you know? Pray and fast.
      4. How can we share this vision? How can we communicate this vision?
         1. What stories can we share that will communicate this vision.
3. My prayer for you is that you will be an effective communicator and that you would see God move in a powerful way – that you would see him do way more than you could ever imagine as he has his way in you as his servant and that you’re able to communicate well.

Let’s end our time in prayer

Thank you for this great teaching from your word. We pray that we would be like Nehemiah – that we would have this great vision to communicate that comes from you – that we would pound the table and demand that someone has to do it, and if no one else will, we will do it. Lord use us. Use us in the lives of those that would provide for it and those that will labor with us. As Dr. Kennedy would say, “Run with people that will run. People that have the passion to go.” Lord, thank you for your word. Give us the wisdom and courage to follow and to quickly do. We pray this in the matchless name of Jesus, Amen.

God bless you.