

Living The New Day Vision

In late 1999, I was driving through a small town in Michigan and I decided to stop in and see a semi-retired Evangelist. We talked for a while and he started asking me questions about our Church. During the conversation I mentioned something that we were doing called Vision 2000: Restoring HOPE to Mid-Michigan. His next comment took me by surprise; he said; “Why are all of you pastors talking so much about vision? My pastor just came up with a new slogan about vision; all you guys really need to do is sell out to Jesus and preach more about heaven & hell and God will take care of the rest.” He later told me he was sick of all the slogans; he felt like pastors and churches had decided that all that was necessary to build the church was slick sayings and advertisements at the expense of the Gospel. A part of what he said was correct; if all we are doing is coming up with “slick” sayings; if that is replacing telling people about Jesus Christ – then we are wasting our time; they then are little more than slogans. Today, I want to help us to avoid that – to keep that from happening and the way to keep our vision and dream from just becoming nice sounding sayings is for us to live out the New Day vision.

So, what is our Vision statement? I’ve mentioned it probably 15-20 times during the first 3 messages in this series.

“Building God Inspired Relationships; Bridging Christ’s Love To Our World.”

Now, what can we do to live out that vision statement so it doesn’t just become a slogan? We start putting it into practice this week and then again the next week after that. We put it into practice during the Thanksgiving & Christmas seasons, which are only a few weeks away. Then we have Easter which is just 6 months away.

Sunday after Sunday, week after week, God will provide us with opportunities to begin putting the vision into practice, by starting to develop relationships that eventually lead to an invitation to Church.

John Maxwell, who I quoted from last week once said, **“Vision without action is merely a bad dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”** What he was saying is that it’s not enough to merely have good ideas. At some point, we have to put our good ideas to work.

A goal or a dream that exists only on a piece of paper, or only in our imagination, is really nothing more than a waste of time. A vision comes to life when we decide that we will invest the time, the energy, the effort, and the money to make it happen. In order for a vision to be realized, we must be willing to take the necessary steps to see it happen. The question then is: how do we do that? How do we get from the place where we’re dreaming about something to the place where we’re celebrating it? Today we’ll focus on three steps that we can take as individuals and as a Church that will help make our vision a reality – that will help us live out the New Day vision.

Step#1: Surround Yourself with The Vision

In a word it’s saturation. We need to saturate ourselves with the vision. Start by memorizing it. Cut it out of the Bulletin and put it on a mirror or on your refrigerator. Practice saying the vision every day. Ask other people at New Day to repeat the vision and you repeat it back to them. The more that we think about our vision the more the vision will sink into our minds, our hearts and then into our life – it will become a part of us and as it becomes a part of us we will start looking for and finding opportunities to put it into practice. So, turn to someone and repeat our vision – it’s on the bulletin cover if you can’t remember it.

A couple of weeks ago I read these verses.

Proverbs 29:18 “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” KJV

Proverbs 29:18 “If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.” The Message

You see, as a believer, our vision as individuals or as a Church is a revelation from God. It is His divine guidance for our lives and for our church. In other words, when we talk about having a vision, we’re really talking about connecting with God’s plan for our life and for our Church. This isn’t just about our goals and what we want for our Church, it’s about

what God wants for us as individuals and what God wants for us as a Church. It's how God wants to use New Day Community Church to impact our part of the world.

God has a purpose; He has a plan for our lives and for our Church. When people don't take the opportunity to connect with God's vision, they perish or as the NIV translates it – “the people cast off restraint.” There's something about knowing God's will for our lives that keeps us on target and as the Message translates it “they are blessed.”

So, we need to surround ourselves at every opportunity with the idea of what God wants to accomplish through our lives. It's always about how God wants to use you and use me to influence and impact people for Jesus Christ. It's about us developing God inspired relationships with people who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior so that we can bridge Christ's love to our world, us being used by God to influence people for Jesus Christ.

We need to surround ourselves with thoughts of God's vision. We need to saturate our lives with it. The more that we immerse ourselves in God's purpose; God's vision for our lives, the more clearly we will discern which next step to take. And, just as important we will be able to recognize which steps not to take.

So, we need to immerse ourselves in our vision. Surround ourselves with thoughts of it. Saturate our lives with it.

Discussion: In Proverbs 29:18 from The Message it tells us that if we “attend to” or follow what God reveals, we will be blessed. Spend some time discussing how we can attend to, follow or saturate ourselves in God's vision so that we can live out the New Day vision?

Step #2: Take Action Every Day

If God has given you or has given us this dream/vision, then we can be sure that it's worth pursuing every day. Every day we need to take steps that will move us forward in our journey -- even if it's only a small amount.

In order for us to live out our vision as individuals and as a Church we must decide not only to saturate ourselves with the vision we must take action on the vision on a daily basis, therefore we need to decide what steps to take on a daily basis that will allow us to live out the New Day vision of developing relationships with people that God can use to influence them for Jesus Christ.

Every morning, we should ask God to direct us to a simple step, something that we can and should do today that will help us to live the dream tomorrow.

Luke 9:23 “Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” NIV

Now, Jesus is talking about our relationship with Him in this verse, but it also applies to us living our vision, we need to daily look for ways to develop new relationships with people who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior and then we must build upon existing relationships so that they can become relationships that God can use to influence people for Jesus Christ.

Discussion: What specific steps can we take between now and Thanksgiving so that we will eventually be living the vision?

Step #3: Commit To The Long Haul

The Christian life -- in fact, all of life -- is a marathon, not a 100 meter dash. The same is true of the New Day vision and the New Day dream, they are not a sprint; they are a marathon. We don't sprint and then were done, we run and we run and we run. We need to do our best Forrest Gump imitation and just keep running and running. The other part of the long haul is this – we don't quit half way through the race – we keep going, even if it takes longer then we want it to take – we keep going.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. 8 And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on

the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.”

NLT

The easiest thing in the world to do is quit when things are hard or when things don't happen as quickly as we would like. I'm sure that every leader in this Church and every Church as far as that goes has thought about quitting, giving up the dream, because it's taking so long, but that's the easy way out and God wants us to finish the course, to remain faithful.

This should be the goal for each and every one of us, to be able to say, “I finished the task. I saw it through. I didn't quit, I didn't give up on the dream.”

Application: Re-read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. What do you need to do this week that will help you to remain faithful and begin living the Dream?