

Back in the 1960's there was a weekly television program called "Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color". Practically every Sunday night my siblings and I, along with my Mom and Dad, would sit around our "black and white" TV and watch as Walt Disney would host an anthology of short films, animated cartoons, and documentaries about things that would interest young and old alike - things like movie making, animation, historical figures (like Daniel Boone and Davie Crocket), and a lot of things that could be discovered through the use of high-speed cameras.

Walt Disney was a man of vision. Even before color television became popular he would film his "made-for-television" movies and documentaries in color so that when the networks eventually changed from black & white to color, he would have an inventory of films that would allow his program to switch immediately.

The crown jewel of Disney's vision was what he called the "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow", or what is today called "Epcot Center". Disney's vision was of a community or small city where people could live and work in peace and safety. His city was to be designed so that all above ground transportation would be by a monorail system that would extend like spokes on a wheel out from the center of the city. Within the city, people could get around by motorized "people movers" that run continuously throughout the city. To provide safety for pedestrians, all automobile traffic was to be kept underground through a system of tunnels.

In the early 1960's, Disney began to see his vision come to fruition when he was able to purchase over 43 square miles of swamp land in central Florida and eventually have it deemed a municipality by the state legislature. But Walt Disney died in 1966, and along with his death came the death of his vision. Apparently, the Disney company's board of directors did not share Walt's vision and decided they did not want to be in the business of running a city. Thus Walt Disney's vision was abandoned, and the Epcot that was supposed to become the prototype for cities of the future simply became another attraction in a giant theme park . . . just a nice place to visit.

Today I want to talk about vision and how it's important to any person or group that wants to get something done. In this study we'll search out the meaning of the word "vision" and see the vision of a couple of the Bible's spiritual giants. We'll see what happens when we don't have vision, and finally, we'll discuss steps we can take to fulfill our own vision.

What is Vision?

So what is "vision"? In the most simple of definitions, vision is the ability to see. But a vision can also be something that a person thinks he sees, but yet it's not real. An example is that of a thirsty cowboy out in the desert with an empty canteen. He's dying of thirst and thinks he sees a pool of water ahead, but after running toward it, he realizes it's just more sand. He had a false vision or what we call a "mirage".

Then there is the "vision" where a person has a dream that seems to be real as in the transfiguration of Yeshua along with Moses and Elijah. In that vision¹ what the disciples thought they saw was so real to them that they even spoke to it.

But the vision I'm talking about is like that of Walt Disney. Disney saw a city that had never been built. One that only he had imagined. A concept his associates could not grasp, and thus abandoned. Walt Disney was one of the American's visionary "giants". Our nation was founded by visionary giants like

¹ Matt. 17:9

James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington - men who envisioned a country unlike any in world history²; a country where people could live in freedom and security . . . a freedom based on laws - and laws based on Judeo-Christian values.

Based on that example, *“vision” is when you can see something that doesn’t exist but you believe you can play a part in bringing it to pass.*

Men are designed by God to be visionary creatures. Thomas Edison saw lighted streets. Henry Ford saw every house with an automobile parked in front of it. Men will buy a somewhat bland piece of property and see a lake, a barn, and a home for his family. He’ll buy an old rusty car because we can see it with shiny new fenders and an immaculately painted engine - a car that has been restored to better than new condition.

Vision is what drives individuals and organizations to take risks, to step out of the norm, to make sacrifices, and to try harder.

I saw this quote on the internet by a man name P.K. Bernard. I don’t know anything about P.K. Bernard, but apparently many who teach in the field of motivation do, because he’s quoted a lot. His quote goes like this -

“A man without a vision is a man without a future. A man without a future will always return to his past.”

This is quite true. We see people every day who simply follow in the footsteps of their parents . . . “my father worked in a coal mine, so I’m working in a coal mine”. Not that there is anything wrong with working in a coal mine, but if our founding fathers were satisfied with repeating the lives of their parents, then we’d still be flying the Union Jack on our flag poles. Thankfully, they did not, and generation after generation of Americans have made it a part of their vision to provide a future for their children that was better than their own.

Men with Vision

The Bible gives us a number of examples of men with vision. Though they all had their shortcomings, they recognized the goal and kept their eyes focused on it. Take, for instance, Abraham. Abraham, according to what we can derive from scripture as well as from Jewish tradition, was a man of means who seems to have held a prominent position in the land of Ur. But Abraham was alone in his belief that there was only one God. So God instructed Moses to leave his comfortable position in Ur and travel to a new land, a land that God had promised would someday belong to his descendants. Abraham eventually entered the land where he endured a number of trials and hardships, but Abraham never took his eye off the goal; He never forsook the vision and thus became the father of all of us who claim to follow the God of Abraham. The Bible says of him -

^{NKJ} **Hebrews 11:8-10** ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

Abraham’s vision was of a Heavenly City - a city not made with human hands. That vision - coupled with the faith he had based on what YHVH had done in his life - caused him to leave the land of his father and endure the hardship of sojourning in a foreign land.

² America’s founding fathers were apparently unaware of the greatness of the nation of Israel under kings David and Solomon.

David is another - though different kind of example. David had a desire and vision to build a permanent dwelling for the God of Israel, Who at that time was living in a tent in the City of David. But God sort of squashed David's vision by telling him that he would not be allowed to build God's house, but rather David's son would build the house. This was more than just a minor setback for David, never-the-less David kept his eyes focused on his vision and went to work drawing up plans and gathering materials for the eventual construction of the Temple. David did not allow any type of bitterness get in the way of moving toward the goal.

Lack of Vision

What happens when there is no vision? Is it OK to simply maintain the status quo? No it's not OK. The proverbs point out that -

^{KJV} **Proverbs 29:18** Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

Vision is what keeps people moving forward toward a common goal. Without vision, people will tend to work against each other, or wander about aimlessly - never getting anywhere and eventually die (or in the case of Israel, cease to be a people).

This proverb is expressed differently in the English Standard Version of the Bible. It says -

^{ESV} **Proverbs 29:18** Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

In this version, the adjective "prophetic" is added to the word vision making it more clear that when people do not share a common "futuristic" goal, they become unruly and do things that are not advantageous to themselves or their associates. Why is this the case? Because without vision, suffering and sacrifice have no value. Without vision, pain has no purpose.

Take for instance a long distance runner. Would a person endure the sacrifice of time and the pain of training if there is never going to be a race? Or for those who run for health reasons, would you do so if there was no hope that it would keep your body in shape or help you shed a few pounds? Probably not! It's because of vision - the expectation of reward or belief that you're working toward the betterment of yourself, your family, or your people - that we are willing to make sacrifices and endure hardship.

But vision is not just the motivation that gets you going, it's what keeps you going as well. Conversely, a lack of vision would cause you to give up.

Take, for example, the case of our founding fathers. Shortly after the Revolutionary War began the Continental Army had suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of the more highly trained and equipped British soldiers. Without the vision of a free America, it would have been easy to give up. But instead, George Washington lead his army across the Delaware River in the middle of the winter and in the midst of a freezing blizzard in order to mount a surprise attack against the enemy soldiers camped just beyond the other side. This was the first decisive American victory of the war, and the sacrifices and suffering of these soldiers "kept them in the war" so to speak, and set the stage for the ultimate American victory over the British.

On the other hand, the ancient Israelites were a perfect example of a people without vision. Though they had been given a "vision" of the future - a secure homeland in the Promised Land. and had a common belief that they were the recipients of the promises given to Abraham, they lost sight of the vision and forsook that promise just days after leaving Mount Sinai. They said -

^{NKJ} **Numbers 14:3-4** "Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" ⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

To repeat P.K. Bernard -

"A man without a vision is a man without a future. A man without a future will always return to his past."

"Return to the past". This is exactly what the Israelites were willing to do when they no longer kept their eyes focused on the vision. Without vision, they were unwilling to endure the hardships that come with maintaining freedom, and were willing to trade freedom for slavery.

Our Vision

It's clear that God's people need a vision, so do we have one? Yes we do. According to scripture, God's promise to Abraham extends to all his children, thus Abraham's vision is ours as well.

^{NKJ} **Genesis 13:14-16** ¹⁴ And the LORD said to Abram . . . "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are -- northward, southward, eastward, and westward; ¹⁵ "for all the land which you see I give to you **and your descendants** forever. ¹⁶ "And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.

Since we are Abraham's children, and since our father Abraham's vision was of the Heavenly City, our vision should be the same. Not only do we share the vision, we also share in the process by which it will come to pass. Why? Because we are also called to be disciples of Messiah Yeshua.

Yeshua was sent with a mission and a purpose - one He openly proclaimed at the beginning of His ministry -

^{ESV} **Luke 4:18-19** ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Yeshua's proclamation is a quote from Isaiah 61:1 and 49:8³ - prophecies of the re-gathering of Israel. The gathering of the lost tribes is something that must take place before Abraham's vision can come to fruition. The re-gathering of Israel is the reason Yeshua was sent, the purpose for His anointing, and the very reason He is called "Christ" - the "Messiah". Everything He did during his brief stay here on Earth was for the purpose of furthering that goal because the ultimate salvation of all mankind depended on getting that done first. So that was His focus, His goal, "His vision: you might say. But it was not God's plan that the restoration to take place at that time. Instead, God wanted restoration to be proclaimed throughout the earth, to all the places His people were scattered, and it was through disciples that the message was to go out. So Yeshua delivered the message to His disciples through both words and deeds, and then told them to raise up other disciples as well.

^{ESV} **Matthew 28:19-20** ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you . . ."

Therefore, our goal and vision is the same as Abraham's - but with the added responsibility given to Yeshua's original disciples . . . raising up disciples to Yeshua. It is not just the Heavenly City, but also to make salvation and restoration known to all those who God is gathering back

How Do We Fulfill the Vision?

- Agree that We Must Be a Part of Something Bigger Than Ourselves

³ The "acceptable year" of Isaiah 61:2 is defined in Isaiah 49:1 - the time when Yeshua begins in its fullness the regathering of Israel

Yeshua had spent 3 ½ years with His disciples, training them for the mission ahead. But even after appearing to them a number of times after being resurrected from the dead, Peter and some of his fellow disciples decided they were going to go back to fishing for a living. After fishing all night and catching nothing, they saw Yeshua standing on the shore. He told them to cast their net on the opposite side of the boat, and to their surprise, it filled up with fish. It was at that point that Peter and the other disciples realized that what they were called to do could and would be successful, but they had to first realize that they collectively had been given a job to do. We must realize that we've been called not for our own salvation, but for the salvation of all mankind.

- Formulate The Vision

Vision is like an unseen goal - you know what it is, but you can't really see it. It's sort of like kicking a field-goal through a goal post that's not there . . . you know the ball went high enough, far enough, and strait enough - you just didn't see the uprights.

Vision must be based on knowledge, otherwise it might simply be a mirage - a water hole that doesn't exist. Though it's not their fault, this has been the problem in many churches . . . their vision is based on a false understanding of Jesus and His message and is therefore not obtainable.

Our vision must be something that's realistically achievable. Abraham's vision was something he knew he would not achieve it in his lifetime, yet he had short term goals that were within his grasp that lead to the fulfillment of the whole.⁴ So it must be with us. We cannot fulfill the collective calling that God has given His people, but we can envision fulfilling part of it. We can envision what we'd like to see our fellowships achieve in a year, in three years, or even five years away. As long as our "short term vision" is in line with the long term vision, we'll be moving forward.

- Write the Vision Down, Explain It, Publish It

I was once told by a man who was a mentor during my teenage years that if a goal was not important enough for me to put it on paper, it would not be important enough for me to reach for it. A goal or vision must be written down. If the goal is a collective goal - a goal for a group, team, or organization - it must also be thoroughly explained and published so that everyone can have access to it.

Our goal and vision has been written down for us in Matthew 28, but our short term goal has yet to be written and explained. Only with a clearly defined and published vision can those who come into the group know where the group is heading.

- Act on the Vision

Once the vision has been clearly stated and published, action must be taken to achieve that goal. Without action, the vision is useless. Thomas Edison once said -

"Vision without execution is hallucination."

One must start immediately to fulfill the vision, otherwise the vision will never be fulfilled. It's for that reason that many corporate vision statements have a time frame in which they intend to fulfill their vision.

Over the years I've noticed in the scriptures that the people of God quite often do things quickly and immediately. Notice Abraham's response when the three angels came to meet him -

⁴ We can safely assume that Abraham continued to try to have a child while he was waiting for the child of promise, and we know that after he did have a child, he took steps to ensure his son had a wife.

^{ESV} **Genesis 18:1** And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. ² He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he **ran** from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth . . .

A good Bible study would be to see how the word “immediately” is used of God’s servants in the New Testament.

- Stay Focused on the Vision

Walt Disney had a vision that had been discussed in the Disney board rooms for years. During the years that plans were being formulated for Disney’s “Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow”, the Disney board created a large number of companies to purchase land, had meetings with various county and state judges, bureaucrats, and state legislators in their attempts to secure certain privileges, and spent hours documenting and even filming Walt Disney’s discussions of his vision. Yet when Walt Disney died, the board quickly turned their back on his vision.

In order to fulfill our vision, we must remain focused. If it’s written according to God’s will, the vision should become what guides the fellowship. It should be what motivates us to overlook personality problems, scriptural differences, personal preferences, and other people’s shortcomings in order to achieve something that is bigger than ourselves. But helping people stay focused on the vision is a hard thing to do. That’s why nearly the entire last half of the book of John is devoted to Yeshua attempting to keep His disciples focused on the vision and the work that was ahead of them.

Communication is the key. Our vision can quickly get off track if we don’t communicate with one another. The proverbs say -

^{ESV} **Proverbs 15:22** Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.

Though giving and taking advice is always needful and appreciated, sometimes we really need to sit down and have a “pow-wow” to see what everyone is thinking. We find in the book of Acts and in Paul’s epistles that the disciples would occasionally reconvene in Jerusalem to re-assess the vision and make sure everyone is still on track. In many ways, that’s what the Acts 15 conference was about. It was a chance for all the disciples to get re-aligned on the vision that had been set for them by Messiah Yeshua.

Conclusion

In this study, we’ve seen that vision is what drives men to do great things, and that without vision, people often fail to achieve. We’ve seen that great men of the Bible were oftentimes motivated by vision, and that we - both individually and collectively - should have vision too. And finally, we saw that there are steps that must be taken in order for us to fulfill our vision.

This fellowship will soon be 11 years old. Over the years we’ve held pretty much to my personal vision - “to be a part of a fellowship that will openly discuss the scriptures with respect for one-another’s viewpoint and without fear of retribution”. I believe it’s time for us to prescribe to a more loftier goal and set a vision that will not only satisfy our personal desires, but will also promote the Kingdom of God. By doing so, I believe God will look down on us and say -

“Well done, good and faithful servants”

How about you?

Shalom Aleichem



