

## **I Have A Vision**

### **Proverbs 29:18a**

#### **Where there is no vision, the people perish:**

Many years ago Martin Luther King made a famous speech on the steps of the White House. It was titled “**I Have A Dream.**” It was a powerful speech where he outlined the future of the black race in America as he saw it.

But this was only a dream in the sense that it was serious thinking brought on by the constant oppression of the black people in America, and in dwelling on this King came up with a rallying cry using his own mind and imagination.

Often times a dream is the starting place of something big when used in this sense. It reflects not only the desire to do something; it also reflects a determination to see it to its natural end. You see King’s dream was not something that came to him in his sleep, or in a trance, but was made from man’s own mind.

Sometimes dreams are not man-made but come directly from God. You remember how the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him about the importance of the child that Mary was carrying. There are many records throughout the Bible about God giving instructions in a dream. We remember how God often spoke in the Old Testament to Joseph by the way of dreams while he was in captivity in Egypt.

These kinds of dreams are called visions in the Bible. A vision is where God speaks directly to mankind in a special way. Many of the books in the Bible were give by God in a vision.

I go through all of this to help you understand that a vision has direct input from God. For a vision to be bona fide there has to be an element of divine guidance and instruction.

In today’s world where claims of signs and visions are such commonplace, we are hard pressed to tell the true vision from the false. Everything must be measured carefully, for we must be ever minded that the true vision comes from God, and the false vision comes from Satan.

I have to confess that the vision I speak of this morning did not come to me in a moment of divine inspiration, but instead is a compilation of thoughts and messages I have received form God over the years. While I am applying this information to Harmony Baptist Church, it could well apply to any church in the world. Listen carefully to my words for you too may have had similar thoughts and wondered about their origin.

**1. I have a vision for Harmony Baptist Church that all its members will become literate in the truths of the Bible.**

This means **knowing the Word by study, obeying the Word by choice, and living the Word by lifestyle.**

I want to see each person who is on our church rolls know God's Word so well that His precepts are in reality written on each heart.

I want to see the day when all actions in each member's life become an automatic response based on what God would have us do: a time when God's Word will be foremost in the mind, heart, and soul.

I want the world outside this church to know that Harmony is made up of people who love God's Word, and practice it in their everyday life. I'm talking about a lifestyle that honors God and His Word.

We have to get rid of the idea that each person can interpret the Bible to suit himself, and that somehow Christianity is different for each person. We have to strive to reach a point in our spiritual lives where the Holy Spirit is in total control of each individual so that the Scriptures will take on a corporate meaning.

The Holy Spirit will never tell two different stories. He clearly stated in the Bible that the Scriptures are of no private interpretation. This clearly means that when the Holy Spirit is in control, the Scriptures will be interpreted exactly right and consistently.

**2. I have a vision for Harmony Baptist Church that all its members will become truly interested in the welfare of each person in the church.**

**This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Love one another as I have loved you, by this the world will know that you are my disciples."**

We often gloss over this because it sounds kind of simplistic. I think maybe we have totally misunderstood the meaning of the word **love** and have applied it in a secular sense.

The love of Jesus encompasses everything we are, ever hope to be, and ever will be. When applied to our daily lives it takes on a new significance in our concern for our fellow man.

When we really have the love of Jesus in our hearts, we begin to think about how our words will be heard instead of being concerned about being heard. It doesn't take but one word of careless speech to drive a brother or sister away from the fellowship of the church.

We have to be acutely aware that each person has a different emotional threshold of understanding and that many people's feeling can be hurt just from an unthinking remark.

We preachers generally realize that some people just talk short to others. That seems to be their natural makeup, but that does not make it excusable when a quick expression or a short answer hurts the feelings of someone else.

That perceived unkind remark that seems so innocent may be just the thing that causes someone leave the church, and in some cases never attend church again anywhere.

Let us apply the gold rule to our speech and **“communicate with others, as we like to be communicated to.”**

Along this line, we must work hard not to be disagreeable. I’ve noticed that some people disagree before the idea is even presented. Let us always keep in mind that every person in the church deserves to be heard on any subject.

We must conquer our desire to be heard above all others and realize that our way is not always the best way. I’m afraid that we are living in a time when opinions are placed on the same level as God’s Word, and those who hold strong opinions will rather see the church disintegrate than admit that they are wrong.

There was one church where a certain person, who always disagreed with everything, was late for a business meeting, and when he arrived, a motion was up for discussion. He stated, **“I don’t know what we are discussing, but I’m against it.”**

**3. I have a vision for Harmony Baptist Church that all its parents will become truly interested serving the Lord and will raise their children accordingly.**

As I look around at our congregation I see many parents missing. We have children who are brought by their grandparents or friends. I see wives whose husbands are at home or somewhere else. Here is the curse of modern day society. The family unit has broken down.

We live in a time when the parents have totally relegated their authority and children run the family. Our society advocates this for today’s children are bombarded almost all their waking hours about things to want and things to do. There never seems to be enough to satisfy their desires, and we parents fall into the trap of trying to please them instead of taking the commanding role in the family and letting the children know that we do know best.

I know the divorce rate is high, and there are many single parents trying to raise children, but this is no excuse, for we have always had single parents throughout history. The important thing is that we teach them the proper relationship with God and His people.

**“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.”**

This is the Bible way; this is God's way. God never said it would be easy, but when you brought life into this world, you inherited a certain responsibility towards God for that life. You must fully accept that responsibility and devote your life to rearing your children. You are most likely the only thing that stands between them and fires of hell.

#### **4. I have a vision for Harmony Baptist Church that it will be fiscal responsible for God's money and property.**

This church belongs to God. This is His property. All the money that comes into the treasury belongs to Him. We are merely stewards when it comes to any of these things.

**We have to make sure that all events that take place in this church are conducted in such a way that God will approve.** This encompasses all activities. We have to be on alert that the business of Satan is never conducted on God's property.

I know this seems frivolous, but there are lines to be drawn. **We should never allow such things as gambling, drinking, or just plain old debauchery to take place in God's house.**

Should we allow secular activities in our facilities? I don't see where God would object just as long as they are conducted within the guidelines of good behavior. I think God would want us to support civic affairs, but we must do it with the understanding that this place belongs to God, and He must be glorified in all that we do.

The money situation is another area in God's work that is loaded with great responsibility. Everybody knows something about managing money. We are taught from the cradle that the measure of one's bank account determines the difference between success and failure in our society. It is so important in our lives that we can hardly draw a breath without money somehow being involved.

We need to be as equally concerned about God's money and make sure that His money is always used for His work.

**"Where do we start?"** is probably a good question. I'd say that we start with knowing how and where our money is being spent. I'm afraid that we have gotten away from this aspect of responsibility because we have been trained to respond to pleas made in the name of Christ, and we generally give liberally.

Take our Lottie Moon and Anne Armstrong Offerings. We usually have goals of several hundred dollars, and most of the time we make the goal. We tithe our weekly offerings to various Southern Baptist Convention agencies. The question I ask is, **"do you know exactly where the money is going and how it is spent?"**

Do you know the salaries of the people we are supporting through these special offerings?

Do you know the people who will get the money we send to the SBC? Is the money being used to support programs that God would approve?

I would venture to say that the most preachers can't answer these question because the agencies we are supporting will not tell us all the facts. **We have no say about who is in charge, what their salaries are, and how they spend the money, and in some instances, they seem to be working against the churches best interest.**

If we can't find out these things, we need to quit supporting these organizations and programs and put God's money where it would best serve His purposes.

This applies equally as well to the popular TV and radio ministers. You may send them money, and that is yours and God's business, but I suspect that most of it is used to support a lavish lifestyle for the minister and God's work gets lets out.

I imagine some of our people sent Jim Baker money before he was exposed as a charlatan. I know some people who were supporting Jimmy Swaggart before he was caught frolicking with prostitutes. I even know some who sent large sums of money to help Oral Roberts build his seven story tall hospital that is no longer in operation. Many fell for the 900-foot Jesus vision that he spoke of.

What I am saying is that we have a responsibility to know exactly how God's money is being used. If any organization will not provide a financial statement that gives the exact costs of the programs and salaries, they have something to hide and should be shunned by responsible Christians.

**5. I have a vision for Harmony Baptist Church that all its members will become missionaries to the lost world about us.**

We have no problem raising money or getting people to go on mission trips to Africa, or even South America. After all, those heathens need to know about Jesus. I would say that this is true to an extent, but we start making excuses just as soon as we begin to talk about the lost people in our neighborhoods.

I could get a group together to go on an exotic sounding overseas mission almost overnight. People would be glad to take their vacation time to do such a beneficial task, but if I talked about a two week concentrated effort of visiting the unsaved in our immediate vicinity, I doubt that I'd have many takers. Just how many people do we have in Harmony who would be willing to spend their vacation time in the slums of Lillington or any other local city?

We have become complacent about the Gospel of Jesus Christ to such a degree that we pass by the lost every day and never think about it. We have to get a burden for souls in our heart to such a degree, and a lifestyle so Christ like that when anyone has been with us they immediately think of Jesus.

**6. I have a vision for Harmony Baptist Church that all its members will become so close to God that they will want to attend church every service.**

I'm afraid that many Christians treat the worship services of the church as if they are optional. This should not be the attitude of followers of Jesus Christ.

Look at some of the excuses we use.

**I wanted to go to the races today, so I skipped church.** I was told that there is a worship service at the racetrack on Sunday so Christians won't have to miss church. Do you think that the racetrack people are concerned with worship or do you suppose they have an ulterior motive to attract people to the races?

**I had friends or relatives in today, and they didn't want to attend church so I stayed with them.** What a lame excuse. The preacher has to buy it for we always have to work with volunteers, but God has totally different ideas about the excuses we use for He looks into the heart and knows that we had rather be with unsaved friends or relatives than with His people in His House.

**I had planned a family gathering so I stayed home today to cook.** God won't buy it. How many solid Christians do you know who have large family gathering almost every Sunday, but still manage to attend church and prepare the necessary food.

We sometimes act as if the noon hour is sacrosanct and if we don't have a meal ready on the hour, the world will come to an end.

**Fishing, golf, ball games. Ice hockey, all kinds of entertainment, and things I haven't even thought about, will keep people away from church.**

I know there are valid excuses to sometimes miss church, but God sees all unwarranted excuses as someone making something worldly more important than worship of His Son Jesus Christ.

What was it Jesus said? **"If you love mother or father more than me, you're not worthy to enter into the kingdom of heaven."** Maybe we had better rethink our priorities when it comes to the worship services.

The only thought we really need in our minds on Sunday is **"am I where I should be if Jesus returned at this very moment?"** A lot of people, who are out in the world, doing the things of the world, will be so busy that they won't hear the trumpet sound.

**Conclusion:**

Have I spoken to you this morning? Sure I have for we are all slack at times in the ways of God. We do things just because we want to, and think God will understand just because we want to do it.

But what I am preaching about is a vision – an ideal church with ideal people.

We will never be perfect here on this earth, but we can unlearn some bad habits when it comes to God and his church. You see most of us are caught up in learned habits. We have been taught to accept the world as being normal, we are taught from the cradle to do what pleases us the most, and we need to unlearn the things that clash with God's desires for our lives and learn how to structure our lives to please Him.

This sermon presents my vision for Harmony Baptist Church. Everything I have said is biblical. I feel that if we had such a church as I have described that God would be pleased and we would receive His blessing beyond anything we can imagine.

All we need is a common vision, and I ask you today are you willing to buy into my vision. If so, won't you come forward and take my hand and in doing so signify that we will seek together to make Harmony Baptist Church the kind of church that God wants it to be.

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