

20/20 vision

Welcome back to our final session of Walking with Purpose! It's been an incredible journey, hasn't it? I trust that each day you are walking more confidently, knowing that your life is one of significance. God is using YOU to fulfill a part of His great vision for this time in history!

Yet while God's vision is perfect, ours is lacking. A lady of high-society was gazing at an image she had never seen before in the city's art museum. "My dear fellow," she said condescendingly to the curator, "I have never seen this painting before. I find the image shallow and rather crude in appearance. What do you call this?" The curator answered without giving the slightest expression, "That, madam is a mirror." The lady's vision was not very focused. Her mind went no further than her preconceived notion of how things should and could be! May we walk away today, and from this study, realizing more than ever how GREAT God is! His ways are not our ways! He can do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine! Oh God, enlarge our vision!



Fellowship

1. If you could ask God to accomplish anything through you, what would it be?



Discipleship

Helen Keller was once asked, "What would be worse than being born blind?" She quickly replied, "To have sight and no vision."

The vision we'll talk about today isn't the supernatural vision God frequently gave in the Bible, although it has some similarities. In the Bible God spoke often through dreams and visions, making His will known. Today He speaks loudly through His Word and the Holy Spirit, though He is certainly not limited to that! Yet though the means may be different than thousands of years ago, His power is not! His power is unlimited and He WILL fulfill His purposes! But do we, as His people, have "vision"? "Vision" is "a supernatural appearance that conveys a revelation or concept; a manifestation to the senses of something immaterial; the act or power of imagination; the mode of seeing or

conceiving; and unusual discernment or foresight.” Vision is closely tied with faith! Being able to envision what we can’t see right now.

First Corinthians 2:9 tells us: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has *conceived* what God has prepared for those who love Him.” We *can't* conceive His greatness, the wonder of His plans, and how awesome He is! But we can try! We can refuse to limit Him to our preconceived notions of who He is. We can claim His promises, look to His power, and trust Him to fulfill HIS vision...no matter how big the job seems.

I was reading some quotes recently that I think you'll like--some quotes by people of *limited vision*.

From a Popular Mechanics Magazine in 1949:

"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons."

The chairman of IBM, in 1943 said:

"I think there is a world market for maybe *five* computers."

The editor in charge of business books in 1957 said:

"I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and *I can assure you* that computer data processing is a fad that won't last out the year."

In 1968, an IBM engineer, commented on the microchip: "But...*what is it good for?*"

In 1977, the President and founder of Digital Equipment said:

"There is no reason *anyone* would want a computer in their home."

In 1876, a Western Union internal memo said:

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. *The device is inherently of no value to us.*"

In the 1920's, people were urged to invest in the radio. Many scoffed and replied: "The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. *Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?*"

In 1895, Lord Kelvin said: "Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible."

Even the Professor of Strategy called airplanes "interesting toys of no military value."

In 1859: "Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy."

In 1899: *"Everything that can be invented has been invented."*

In 1872: "The theory of germs is ridiculous fiction".

And in 1873, the British surgeon to Queen Victoria said, "The abdomen, the chest, and

the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon".

Yet, here's a paraphrase of what God tells us in Ephesians 3:20: "You cannot out-ask me; you cannot out-think me; you cannot out-imagine me; you cannot out-dream me; you cannot out-do me; for I am able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you ask or think."

Losing focus on the Jesus of Scripture blurs our own view—not only of Christ—but of ourselves and our mission as well.

Sometimes small churches look at themselves and say, "Oh, we can't do that! We're too small! We don't have the resources." Or maybe you know in your heart that God wants **you** to step out in obedience and do something unimaginable! If our vision is limited by what **we** see and imagine, we'll never venture out of our comfort zone. We'll take baby steps of faith rather than giant leaps. I'm reminded of the story of a man who had done something wonderful and the king called him in and told him he could mark off as much of the kingdom as he wanted and it would be his. The man took his staff and traced a line in the dirt around himself. The king watched as he finished and said, "Is that all you want? Just what's in that circle?" The man said, "NO. I want everything OUTSIDE the circle."

What are you asking God for? Are you bold in your dreams for Him? Are you asking Him to do the impossible...or limiting your vision to what you can imagine accomplishing?

We've seen some examples of limited vision...now let's look at someone who dared to ask God for more! Turn with me to First Chronicles chapter 4, verses 9 and 10 as we read it together: "Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, 'I gave birth to him in pain.' Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would **bless me and enlarge my territory!** Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request."

In just two verses, we have a man who dared to ask God to do something great! Aren't you excited to get to heaven to hear about **how** God granted his request? I know I am...and I'm as equally excited to hear how He will answer yours!

Jabez looked beyond where he was and what he could do. He looked beyond his past and all the negative connotations of the **earthly name** given to him. His vision went to where God was and what **God** could do. He didn't sell God short! Turn with me now to another example of people who did! They put God in a box and didn't take Him at His word. The story is found in Numbers 13...and we'll start at verse 1: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.'" So we see here that God has blatantly **promised** them the land! Now the people just need to do their part in claiming it. Skip down to verses 26, as we read all the way through verse 11 of chapter 14. Numbers 13:26-14:11): "They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community

at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account: ‘We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev, the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.’ Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, ‘We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.’ But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.’ And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, ‘The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendant of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes and we looked the same to them.’ That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, ‘If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?’ And they said to each other, ‘We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.’ Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, ‘This land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into the land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.’ But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. The Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?’”

Oh, those foolish Israelites! But...wait a minute! How often has God made a promise to *me* and I’ve doubted? My vision of His unlimited power has blurred and I can only imagine what I think I can handle? How often has He promised to help me *overcome* sin and I’ve persisted in living in it? I know He’s died to set me free...but it seems so hard...or scary.

Scientists tell us that a dense fog covering seven city blocks to a depth of 100 feet is composed of *less* than *one* glass of water. That amount of water is divided into about 60 *billion* tiny droplets. Yet when those minute particles settle over a city or the countryside, they can almost block out everything from sight. Many Christians today live their lives in a fog. They allow a cupful of problems to cloud their vision and dampen their spirit. Anxiety, turmoil and defeat strangle their thoughts. How crucial it is to walk by faith through the tough times, not by what we see around us. By magnifying the Lord through praise and worship, He shows Himself bigger than our problems.

Martha Berry was a lady with a vision to help poor children, so she began a school. She had no books, no building and no money. But she had a dream. She went to Henry Ford to ask for a donation. Mr. Ford reached into his pocket and gave Martha Berry a dime. Most people would have been insulted! There he was, a multi-millionaire and all he gave was ten cents! But Martha took that dime, bought a packet of seeds, planted a garden, raised a crop, sold it and bought more seeds. After three or four harvests, she had enough money to purchase an old building for the children. She then **returned** to Mr. Ford and said, "Look what your dime has done!" The man was so impressed that he donated a million dollars to the school.

You may not feel like God's given you a lot to work with! Yet faith and ability as small as a mustard seed, yielded to God, can produce limitless results!

Gary Cooper lacked vision. He turned down the leading role for one of the most famous movies of all time, *Gone with the Wind*." He said, "I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper."

Have you ever heard of, or better yet **eaten**, one of Mrs. Fields cookies? This world-renown company was started by a regular housewife who loved to bake. Yet the response she initially received to her business plan would blur **my** vision. "A cookie store is a bad idea," she was told. "Besides, the market research reports say people like **crispy cookies**, not soft and chewy cookies like you make." She ended up making hundreds of millions of dollars.

Fred Smith's vision led him to write a college paper, proposing the idea of reliable, overnight delivery service. He got a "C" on the paper, and this response from his professor: "The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C,' **the idea must be feasible**." Smith later founded Federal Express.

Eagles are known to have vision. An eagle can see up to five miles, and well beyond normal sight. The eagle knows where it is going and determines how it is going to get there. Other birds migrate by instinct when the climate changes...yet the eagle stays in its territory throughout the year, season after season. The eagle is dependable and will hold its place in its territory. When a storm approaches, other birds fly in fear while the eagle is actually **energized** by the challenge of the storm. He catches the wind and rises above the storm. What a picture! No wonder God's Word compares us to eagles!

I believe God is looking for men and women of vision who can "see" with their spiritual eyes and catch the wind of God's Spirit. These men and women, like the eagle, are dependable, focused and fearless when it comes to their God-given assignments.

Don't be discouraged when you've been given a vision from God and others don't seem to "get it." The story is told of a pastor who thought God gave **him** an idea, so he presented it in the monthly elders meeting. After giving his most impassioned plea and really "selling" the idea to the elder board, the board voted down the pastor's proposed

changes 12 votes to 1. The head elder looked at the pastor and said, “Well pastor, it looks like you’ve been out-voted. I guess that’s all for this meeting, so will you please close in prayer?”

The pastor, not wanting to give up yet on what he felt God was leading him to do, then led in prayer. As he prayed, he lifted his hands up to heaven and prayed, “LORD - I know my brothers here do not have the same vision you have given me. Please help them to see that this is not MY vision, but **YOUR vision!**”

At that exact moment, a lightning bolt with a loud clap of thunder burst in through the window in the meeting room, striking the table, splitting it in two and knocking all the elders to the floor. As the dust cleared, the pastor looked at the head elder and said – “**SO**, what do you think about *that*?”

The head elder, dusting himself off, sighed and said, “Well, I guess that’s 12 votes to 2.”

(chuckle)

You know, some people will **never** catch your vision! Caleb and Joshua were the only ones bold enough to stand on God’s promises...and were the only ones rewarded for their faith! God fulfilled His promises to **them** while the rest perished in the desert for lack of vision. Vision says, "As I look ahead, two to three years down the road, I **do see** God doing it, even though I may not know all of the details **today**." Vision is not a crystal ball or hearing audible voices. It is the belief in one’s heart that God is going to do something that is consistent with His Word, consistent with His will, and consistent with His character. It’s believing that what God is going to do will have an amazing impact on your life.

So I ask you, “Who determines your vision?” The naysayers around you? Or the God who is able to do exceedingly more than all you can ask or imagine? William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army tells us his secret: “God has had all that there was of me. There have been men with greater brains than I, even with greater opportunities, but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart and caught a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with me **and** them, on that day I made up my mind that God should have all of William Booth there was. And if there is anything of power in the Salvation Army, it is because God has had all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will, and all the influence of my life.”

One of the greatest tragedies for people is to live in darkness when they **could** live in the light. Rose Crawford had been blind for 50 years before she had an operation that gave her sight. She exclaimed, “I just can’t believe it,” as the doctor lifted the bandages from her eyes. She wept - when for the 1st time in her life – her eyes were open to a world so dazzling and beautiful.

The amazing thing about her story, however, was that **20 years of her blindness was unnecessary!** She didn't know that surgical techniques had been developed, and that an operation could have restored her vision at the age of 30.

Did you know that one of the most popular aquarium fish is the shark? Sharks are fascinating: if you catch a small one and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium you put it in. Sharks can be six inches long, yet fully matured. But if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of eight feet.

Sadly, that's what happens to some Christians. I've seen some of the cutest little six-inch Christians who swim around in a little puddle and are content there. They have no idea how great they would become if they didn't confine themselves to the limits others placed on them! May God help us not to be confined to a little puddle out of insecurity, but instead to realize that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Nothing is too difficult for Him!

Viktor Frankl survived the death camps of Nazi Germany. He also made a startling discovery about why **some** survived the horrible conditions...while others did not. He looked at several factors - health, vitality, family structure, intelligence, and survival skills. Yet he finally concluded that **none** of these factors was primarily responsible. The single most significant factor was a sense of future vision - the impelling **conviction** of those who were to survive that **they had a mission to perform, some important work left to do.**

Your life and mission is waiting. ***Walk with Him...and walk with purpose!***



Ministry

2. Discuss the quote: "For lack of vision the people perish."
3. Read Ephesians 3:20, 21. Whose reputation of greatness is "on the line" according to verse 21?

4. Read and discuss the following verses:

Numbers 23:19

I Kings 6:12

Psalms 138:8

II Thessalonians 1:11

5. Read Numbers 11:21-23. How have you unconsciously limited the arm of the Lord?
6. How does fear of failure influence vision?
7. Discuss the quote by Abraham Lincoln: “I’m not so concerned you have fallen but that you rise.”
8. Re-read I Chronicles 4:9, 10. How would you like God to bless you and enlarge your territory?



Evangelism

9. Talk about next week’s Celebration Week...and those you have been praying for and sharing your testimony with! Invite them to join you for this time of fellowship...*and* for the next series!



Worship

10. Read James 5:13-18, as you pray for each members’ needs and purpose-filled life.

Rejoice in what God has done and will continue to do!