

Title: **Where Are We Going?**

Text: Matthew 28:19-20

Date: January 15, 2012

Place: DCOG

Theme: Unleashing Our Potential

Resource: "Here Today, There Tomorrow" by Gary McIntosh

Gary McIntosh tells this story in his book...

Once upon a time there lived a king who was growing old. He knew the time was coming when he would need to give the rule of his kingdom to one of his four sons. The question was to which son should he give the kingdom? To answer that question, the king called his four sons together and gave them a challenge.

"I want each of you to go on a long journey," the king said. "While you are on your journey, look for a gift to bring me that will be worthy of my kingdom. Whoever brings me the best gift will receive my kingdom."

Taking up the challenge, the first son left on his journey. After awhile, he came to the Impenetrable Forest. He spent a long time looking for a way through the forest, but could never find a way. However, while looking at one of the trees, he noticed one of the limbs was twisted in an unusual manner. He decided to cut down that branch and make it into a cane for his father. "Surely, this will be a gift worthy of a kingdom," he thought.

The second son also began his journey. He too came to the Impenetrable Forest, but somehow found a way through. Further on, he arrived at the Uncrossable River. After spending some time attempting to ford the river, he gave up. By chance, he peered into the river and noticed a sparkling stone. Reaching into the river to retrieve the stone, he realized that he had found a valuable gem. "Surely this will be a gift worthy of a kingdom," he thought.

Eventually the third son started on his journey. He too came to the Impenetrable Forest and found a way through. He came to the Uncrossable River and found a way across. Then he came to the Unclimbable Mountain. He walked around the base of the mountain looking for a way to the top, but never found a path. While looking for a path up the mountain, he noticed some flowers, the likes of which he had never seen before. He decided to bundle the roots of the flowers and take them back to make a beautiful flower garden for his father. “Surely this will be a gift worthy of a kingdom,” he thought.

The fourth son soon began the journey and, like the others, came to the Impenetrable Forest, the Uncrossable River, and the Unclimbable Mountain. He found a way through the forest, over the river, and up to the top of the mountain. As he stood on the top of the mountain, he looked on the other side and saw a luscious, green valley with streams of crystal clear water. The one thing he could not find, however, was a gift for his father that would be worthy of a kingdom. Sadly, he returned to his father’s village.

After the sons returned, they presented their father with the gifts they hoped would be worthy of a kingdom. The last son had no gift to give but told his father of the green valley on the other side of the mountain with the crystal clear water.

The following day the father called his sons together. He thanked the first three sons for their gifts, but to the fourth son he gave his kingdom.

Why did he give the fourth son the kingdom? The fourth son gave his father the greatest gift of all—the gift of vision. The father realized that his fourth son had given him a vision of a better future for his people. Perhaps the fourth son could lead the people of the kingdom to the green valley with crystal clear water where they would experience a better life.

“True leadership is not about managing people; it is about inspiring them. It is vision that inspires, not mission.”

“Mission tells us what we do, but vision helps us see it.”

* Ministry Advantage tells us that a vision statement is the snapshot of how things are going to be; the unique picture of a preferred future, which is what it will look like when your mission is being lived out fully in our church.

What will it look like when we arrive?

* A vision statement reflects the unique calling of our church. It is a succinct, distilled statement of where our congregation sees itself going.

* Have you ever noticed that movies are never as good as the books? The authors often give us a vision that filmmakers are unable to match.

Notice how the same is true in the scripture...

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Even though all churches must, in some way, embrace the Great Commission as their mission, each church has its own unique sense of calling or vision.

I. Does the Decatur Church of God have a unique sense of calling?

- A. Where do we find our strengths?
 - a. Evangelism
 - b. Worship
 - c. Fellowship
 - d. Discipleship
 - e. Ministry/Service
 - f. Stewardship

* God has arranged the parts of the Body in such a way that each part needs the other parts. This means that no church will be able to accomplish God's Kingdom agenda for our world by itself.

- B. Without this sense of calling we will be fuzzy about everything else.

* Remember the Charlie Brown cartoon where he is shooting arrows into the fence and then drawing circle targets around the arrows. When Linus challenges him, Charlie Brown responds, "Yes, but this way I never miss."

II. How can we discover God's specific calling?

- A. What is our specific part in God's blueprint?
 - a. This is not a democratic decision.
 - b. Trying to delineate a vision by group consensus only leads to chaos or to a watered-down version.

* Remember the illustration of a group of blind people trying to describe an elephant?

1. The one with his hand on the side said that an elephant was like a wall.
2. Another felt the elephant's leg and said that an elephant was like a tree.
3. A third felt the elephant's trunk and said that the elephant was like a snake.

B. I believe that one of the primary responsibilities of the Senior Pastor is that of defining a vision.

- a. Throughout the Bible God gives visions to individuals.

* God gave Moses a peek into the Promised Land—a clear picture of where Israel was headed.

- b. It is vital that I feel passionate about the vision and can communicate it in a variety of compelling ways.

C. There are no cookbook processes for drumming up a vision.

- a. It tends to be personal, intuitive, and passionate.
- b. It will allow our congregation to simply and clearly connect with where the church is headed as a whole.
- c. Our programs, events, budgets, staff, goal-setting and strategic planning should align with this vision of the future.

III. Vision is the compelling picture of our preferable future.

A. It may be a focus on the quality or characteristics of our preferred future.

B. It may be dramatic and include a specific end result.

C. It may include a large, outlandish but possible accomplishment.

D. It may describe an accomplishment that will take 10-30 years.

* For Moses it was a Promised Land; for Abraham an endless line of descendants; for David a throne; for the disciples the coming of God's Kingdom; and for Paul a string of Gentile churches.

* “Visions empower people to see what is possible and to move in that direction.” Ministry Advantage goes on to say, “A compelling vision tugs at our hearts and motivates our wills.”

Conclusion: Our vision statement has been “Passionate About Families Growing Into A Mature Relationship With Jesus Christ.”

I put forward, “Helping Families Grow Into A Mature Relationship With Jesus Christ.”

What do you think?

1. Does it clearly state what our congregation is going to become when our mission is accomplished?
2. Does it indicate how the world might be a different place without our congregation?
3. Do the words convey the meaning intended?
4. Is it concise and easy to remember?
5. Is it believable, challenging, inspiring and compelling?

Here is what I want to know...

1. Do you feel the compelling need to see our families grow in Christ?
2. Do you know and believe that God’s Word supports and encourages this challenge?
3. Do you accept the challenge that this vision introduces into our personal and church life?

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