

The Camp Hill Vision

Seeking the Lost, Equipping the Saved and Bringing All Into the Image of God

A few years ago our congregation wisely made a vision statement. For those who might not know what a vision statement is, let me explain. The Bible teaches God's people to plan their work and then work their plan. Proverbs 13:16 (GNT), "*Sensible people always think before they act, but stupid people advertise their ignorance.*" A church without a plan is no better than a ship without a destination, drifting the ocean and never finding port. A congregation of God's people must look to future and determine what course they will follow to arrive at the correct destination in the end. Simply understood, a vision is simply a statement outlining what the direction and destination for the congregation. It is what we are about.

How does a congregation determine what their vision is? Proverbs 21:5 reminds us that "The plans of the diligent *lead* surely to advantage...", but our plans must be based on the will of God.

- James 4:15, "Instead, *you ought* to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'"
- Proverbs 16:9, "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."
- Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."

If a congregation's vision statement does not line up with the word of God, then it is not a vision statement we should be following. What is Camp Hill church of Christ's vision statement? Here it is.

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- Seeking the Lost: We are told to take the gospel to all the people of the world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47). That precedent was set forth in the lives of the apostles and carried down to the next generation as recorded in the Book of Acts. *Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word* (Acts 8:4). We are to *turn the world upside down* with the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:6). It is most certainly a biblical perspective to reach out to the lost world with the gospel.
- Equipping the Saved: We were saved by God and designed "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:12). Hebrews 13:20-21 beautifully says, "*Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*" To equip the saved should be at the forefront of our mind concerning those in the church family; therefore it is part of our vision at Camp Hill.
- Bringing All Into the Image of God: We are told in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*" *God is light and in Him in no darkness at all* (1 John 1:5). We are to "*walk in the light as He is in the light*" (1 John 1:8) for we are the *children of light* (Ephesians 5:8). We are constantly being

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made into the image of God *through the renewing of our mind* (Romans 12:1). Bringing us into the image of God is what we are about at Camp Hill church of Christ.

Since Seeking the Lost, Equipping the Saved and Bringing All Into the Image of God are all in the will of God, then having this as our primary vision in Camp Hill is a good thing. There is however much more to having a vision statement than just jotting down a slogan on a banner and hanging it on the wall in the auditorium. There must be a path spelled out on how to reach this vision. This is what our four-part series concerns at the closing of this year 2014. The elders and I want all in the church family to not only embrace YOUR vision statement, but to also take the path to make it so.

There are four steps to attaining this vision which I would like to cover over the next four lessons. They are as follows.

- 1) Discipline: Living for Christ
- 2) Cell Groups: Fellowship in Christ
- 3) Bible Studies: Education toward Christ
- 4) Good Works: Service to Christ

Each of these are vital for the vision to become reality. We will cover them in order and I pray that we will fully take these steps for the coming year of 2015. The elders are convinced by the end of the next year we will see a remarkable difference.

I. Discipline: Living for Christ

Paul reminded his younger protégé Timothy to live a self-disciplined life unto God. 1 Timothy 4:7-8 “...discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” He again emphasized to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” He would say to the Colossians in 2:5, “For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.”

Our God is serious about His people living a self-disciplined life in Christ Jesus. He demands this for two primary reasons.

A. To make sure we go to heaven

Whether we want to admit it or not, our *deeds will follow us* (Revelation 14:3). We are to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling* (Philippians 2:12) as we await that great Day of Judgment *drawing near* (Hebrews 10:23). We are to walk in the manner as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6) and when we choose not to do this, we place our soul in peril (James 5:19-20). We can say we have great faith in Jesus, but our lifestyle may prove otherwise.

B. To make sure others glorify Him

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*” The lives we live for Jesus can reflect poorly on the Savior Himself. 1 Peter 2:12 states, “*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers,*

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they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” We must not become a stumbling block to the lost of this world from finding Jesus.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 3:16-17, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*” Paul was guiding Timothy to stick with the Bible concerning his teaching, reproof, correction and training of others in order that the Christians of Ephesus would be fully equipped in Christ. It is through the studying of God’s word which becomes a guiding force unto self-discipline in the life of the Christian. That is how they were to be equipped.

What happens when the individual church member decides not to live a self-disciplined life? What if while they claim to represent Jesus that they actually live a blatant life contrary to teachings of Jesus? What is the Bible teaches us to live sober lives and the Christian decides to live a drunken life? What if Jesus says to love one another, but one chooses to live a life of hate toward his brother? What if Jesus said to live morally, but the Christian adopts a life of immorality? Do we not see this becomes a hindrance to the vision we discussed?

When this occurs it becomes necessary to teach self-discipline through church discipline. When one loses the ability to discipline themselves, then we become our *brother’s keeper* (Genesis 4:9). Jesus addresses how to carry this task out in Matthew 18:15-20.

Step One: Individual Confrontation

Matthew 18:15, “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

We are to go to them IN PRIVATE to let them know that they are in sin. The reason for the privacy is because often we might not know we are doing something that is sinful, particularly when we are young Christians. Most of the time when we will simply go to someone privately and express that we have been hurt by another, they will correct that behavior.

This happens every day in the church family as well as in the world because it works. How can a person change if they do not know they have a problem? If he listens to you, then you have won that brother back to the Lord, but sometimes people love their sin so much that they are not willing to listen. It might also be because of a personality conflict or simply because we might be poor in our communications. It might even be that they are not in sin and that we might be falsely assessing the situation. In any case we must investigate further before it can be resolved.

Step Two: The Establishment stage.

Matthew 18:16, “But if he does not listen {to you,} take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.”

Because there was meaningful disagreement between the two brothers in light of the accusation of sin, it must be confirmed for accuracy. The accuser is to gather two or three others

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for the purpose of confirming the basis of the contrasting views. There are key rules to follow in this step.

- A) It is EXTREMELY important to not choose people who are your good buddies or “Yes” men whom automatically agree with everything you say. If the accused perceives unfairness, then they will not listen to them by default. Choose some people from their circle of influence so as to be effective.
- B) Go into it with the possibility you might be wrong in your perception. To think otherwise is to make yourself vulnerable to self-deception, something we all can be susceptible to. 1 Corinthians 8:2, *“If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.”*
- C) Be sure to communicate your love for their soul above all. It is not about who is right or wrong, but about them being with you and God in heaven. If it even has a glimpse of “Gotcha”, then it will utterly fail.

Call a meeting to resolve the issue. Start out the meeting with a prayer and make it clear that everyone in the room has the goal to be in heaven someday. With that in place, make your case concerning the sin and the hurt it has caused. Ask the peers to confirm whether or not it is a legitimate concern. If it is, then allow the erring brother or sister an opportunity to respond.

Perhaps there might be a plausible explanation for what was perceived. They might even attempt to justify their lack of discipline. Perhaps they might even admit the sin and begin the repentance process. Those are all good steps in the right direction to putting them on back on the path of self-discipline. This is why it is referred to as the “Establishment Phase” of discipline, for they are establishing the facts. But what if it is revealed that they are sinning and are unwilling to listen to their peers?

Step Three: Group Intervention

Matthew 18:17, *“And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.”*

There is a step of recovery in an addict’s life called an Intervention. All the people who are significant in the life of that individual are assembled in a circle and group confront the addict as they enter the room. One by one they go around the room, telling the addict of the hurt he has caused to them. They are attempting to convince him he has a problem, which is the first step to recovery.

In that same way, the life of the Christian who has given up on self-discipline and gone headlong into sin has hurt not only himself, but the body of Christ. These people are his brothers and sisters in Christ, the most significant individuals in the life of the addict of sin. They care for his soul and want him to go to heaven, knowing that practicing sinners will not go to heaven (1 John 3:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). They collectively want to win him back to the kingdom of God.

The verse said to *tell it to the church*, but how is this done? It can be through a general announcement to the church. It could be to one family at a time by the elders of the congregation. It could be done through letter. It is not as important “how”, but that the church is on the same

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page concerning the soul of that individual. They are to lovingly confront the individual about the danger of that behavior and the need to see that they are in the wrong with God.

How long this step takes might be a few weeks or even longer. They can even do it all at once in the spirit of intervention similar to the drug, alcoholic or gambling addict. Remember the spirit of which it is to be done, to win the brother or sister back to the Lord. But what if the sinner fails to even listen to their own community of loving brothers and sisters?

Step Four: Withdraw

Matthew 18:18, *"Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

If the saint who chooses to abandon their covenant with God through sin will not even listen to their fellow saints, then there is nothing that can be done any longer for the time being. The church remove them from the fellowship, knowing that the only remaining possibility to admit the problem is through the natural consequences of the sin. Perhaps they will be back someday if they find their way.

The New American Standard Edition most accurately renders the passage, *"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."* It is not the church that decides whether that person is in a saved state, but God. The church follows the head of the church, Whom is Christ. We recognize that Jesus has said the sinner is no longer covered by His blood until he turns from the sin. They have already been loosed, therefore the church family recognizes that which heaven ordained. It was already established as scriptural before it was even brought to the whole congregation. *Matthew 15:19-20 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."*

Why Church Discipline?

Peter said in 1 Peter 1:3 that Christians were *"born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"*. As babes in Christ we are to *"long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."* With this concept in mind I leave you with five reasons why a lack of individual self-discipline hinders the vision of Camp Hill and discipline must be encouraged in light of it.

- A. It sends a Message to the "New-born" that self-discipline must be prevalent in their lives.
- B. It sends a message to the "Old-born" to be a good example for others.
- C. It sends a message to the "Un-born" to give Christ a try in light of human weakness.
- D. It sends a message to the "Error-born" that we love with the passion of God.
- E. It sends a message to God we are serious about our commitment to Him.