

Annual Celebration and Vision Sunday

“Defining Our Purpose & Setting Our Course”

Luke 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

Jesus was had a plan. He did not live his life by the seat of his pants. I didn't shoot from the hip. He didn't make it up as he went. Jesus had a plan for his life and ministry. Where did he get the plan? I believe that he got the plan right after his baptism when the Spirit led him into the wilderness to fast and pray forty days and forty nights. What do you think that was all about? Jesus was listening to His Heavenly Father to get the purpose, priorities and plans for his 3 ½ years of ministry. It is near the end of that ministry, just before going to the cross that this verse appears. “He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. That is a man on a mission. That is a purpose driven life. Jesus lived his life with purpose and a plan.

God has a purpose and a plan for each and every believer's life. He has a road map for your life. Read Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.”*

While on my recent sabbatical I had some time to do some recreational reading and study. I decided to continue the research on my genealogical studies. I have tracked both of my mother and father's family line back to about 1690. Historical documents tell us that the originator of my mother's line began in America with Louwys Belyea, a mariner, sailing his ship from LaRochelle, France to New Amsterdam (NYC) with a load of Huguenots. Further study showed that he probably was not the captain of a ship, or if he were he did not sail directly to America or it would have been recorded in the ship passenger logs which I have searched back to 1600. It is more likely he fled Huguenot persecution with other Huguenot aboard the many privateering ships that left LaRochelle for the West Indies. Many of those originally honest Huguenots turned into pirates and finally settled in New Amsterdam.

The question came to me as I researched his ship voyage as to how anyone in that era navigated across an ocean they did not know to a place they had never been. My studies revealed some interesting things about navigational techniques of the 16th and 17th centuries. There were a variety of strange ways that sailors tried to steer their way to America before longitude and latitudes were established.

Illustration: (ie) Navigation techniques through the ages

Latitude & Longitude: Ancient mariners did not have the advantage we have of knowing latitude and longitude and they certainly did not have GPS guidance systems.

The Raven: Floki Vilgjardarsson, a great Viking explorer credited with the discovery of Iceland, carried aboard a cage of ravens. When he thought land should be near, he would release one of the

birds. If it circled the boat without purpose, land was not near, but if it took off in a certain direction, the boat followed, knowing the bird was headed toward land.

Lead Line

Much more valuable, at the time, was the invention of the **lead line (c.13th Century)**, which was a tool for measuring the depth of water and the nature of the bottom. This line was weighted with lead and had graduated markings to determine sea depth. The lead was coated with wax to bring up samples of the bottom. Sailing directions from the 14th Century reading, ***"Ye shall go north until ye sound in 72 fathoms in fair grey sand. Then go north until ye come into soundings of ooze, and then go your course east-north-east."*** (A fathom is about 6', 72 fathoms is 432 feet! – that's a long line.)

Our Lives

Sailing navigation is a lot like the way some people live their lives. They are adrift on the sea of life, not sure where they are much less where they are going. They live without purpose and without a plan. God has not put us on earth to make our way blindly through life without direction. He has given us directions for finding His purpose and plan.

Many people live their lives with a sea anchor. A sea anchor was a broken mast and sail dangling over the side of the ship that acted as a drag, thus a sea anchor. It could cause the ship not only to slow its progress but turn gradually in a large circle. Sea Anchors are those things that that drag you down, things you never got over, things you refuse to let go of.

My message this morning is about God's Purpose and Direction for this church, but more importantly it is also about God's purpose and direction for your individual life. Where are you this morning on the sea of life? What is your purpose? What is your course setting?

Personal Purpose: What is your purpose?

(ie) A Purpose Driven Life (Church) by Rick Warren

God wants each of us to live our lives with purpose. What has God called you to do? To fulfill that calling there are some things you must NOT do or you will be sidetracked and not reach His desired haven.

Corporate Purpose: So too, God has a plan for His church, not just the church universal but for every local church. The question for us is "Where the church is going. What's our purpose, our priorities, and our course setting and direction?"

There are three points to the message this morning. We will be looking at three different passages. We will go as far as we can this morning and pick up next week where we leave off.

- 1. Our Purpose – Colossians 1:25-29**
- 2. Our Priorities – Philippians 3:12-14**
- 3. Our Plan – I Corinthians 9:24-27**

1. Our Purpose – Colossians 1:25-29

Our purpose helps to keep us focused. It serves as **a compass**. (True North)

Colossians 1:25-29 NIV

*25. I have become its servant by **the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness** -- 26. **the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.** 27 **To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** 28. **We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.** 29. **To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.***

“We are committed to building a loving church family that is biblically sound, evangelistically passionate, ministry-focused, and radically committed to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior – in worship, prayer, teaching and fellowship.”

There is nothing here about size, numbers or buildings. This church is not about itself, or expanding its influence, or becoming a mega church, or an influential church. This church is about JESUS CHRIST and exalting him above all else.

Every time we gather together (and that is the meaning of the word church- ecclesia, gathering or assembly) we do so to lift up Jesus Christ. That is true whether it is Sunday School, prayer meetings, worship services, youth groups, small groups, board meetings, committee meetings, or for fun and fellowship. It is all about JESUS.

He is the HEAD of the church. We are the body. I am not the head of the church, Jesus is. I am an under-shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd. We who gather are God's church, his body, his family. We are the family of God if we are saved by faith and washed in his blood. We exist to be His dear children, His family and to bring others into that family while there is still time. We are not building our own kingdom. We are building His Kingdom. Our little kingdom fiefdom will end. (You know what a **fiefdom** is?

When we cease to be a family we cease to follow his directions, his course, and his priorities. When we cease to be a family I don't want to be your pastors. I don't want to be the CEO of a corporation. I want to be the under-shepherd who cares for God's sheep even as Jesus would. Does that mean we cannot grow beyond 300, 400, or 500? No, that means we must build a community, of families within the family.

My Personal Purpose: “Love them, feed them, care for them.” Preach the Word, Pray.

Personal Purpose: Where Are You Going

(ie) Billy Graham story of Albert Einstein.

(ie) Are you sailing without a compass, or like Capt Jack Sparrow, with a broken compass. Have you lost focus? Have you lost your way?

2. Our Priorities – Philippians 3:12-14

A priority is like **a map**. It sets our clearly our intended destination.

Philippians 3:12-14 NIV

12. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14. **I press on toward the goal** to win **the prize** for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul was a man of purpose but he was also a man of priorities. The two go together. They go hand in hand. You cannot have defined purpose without establishing some priorities.

(ie) Boundaries – personal detours, distractions, little things side track you in your pursuit of holiness.

God's Priorities

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.
Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, strength.

What are your personal priorities? What is the main thing(s)? What do you live for?
What is the bottom line? What is that for which everything else must be subservient?
What is first in your life and thoughts?

*Well, pastor, right now it is money. It consumes me. The market is doing poorly and it worries me to death. Or, the job market is terrible, cost of living is up, gas is outrageous, health care costs are killing me. I can't seem to get ahead. That is what fills my mind night and day. Well, thank you for your honesty. **Is that God's priority for you?***

12 Strategic Priorities

We have twelve (12) strategic priorities. By “strategic” we mean deliberate. We have not detoured from those priorities. We cannot fulfill all of them at once but little by little, a little here, a little there, slowing and inexorably *we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus...* (Philippians 3:14) Priorities serve as a rudder, keeping us on course.

1) Worship, 2) Prayer, 3) Fellowship, 4) Teaching, 5) Training, 6) Evangelism 7) Missions, and then specific ministries
8) Children, 9) Youth, 10) College, 11) Facilities, and 12) Dreams.
(that's 12 priorities)

We have outlined what we intend to do in each of those categories. Not as goals, but as guidelines of intent and purpose – our vision of where we are going.

3. Our Plans – or Our Course – I Corinthians 9:26

Luke 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

Our course is that which is laid out for us in heaven by the Lord himself. He is guiding us safely into his desired haven. We are not on our own. Jesus set his course, or he set his sail toward Jerusalem. Paul set his course to go to Rome whatever the cost involved he knew God wanted to get him there.

The Course or Plan (the race course, the road map)

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV

24. Do you not know that in **a race all the runners run**, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as **to get the prize**. 25. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it **to get a crown** that will last forever. 26. **Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly**; I do not **fight like a man beating the air**. 27. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have **finished my course**, I have kept the faith:

Plans are the directions we plan to go in. Plans are the course set out before us based on our purpose and priorities. Our plans aren't just invented. They grow naturally out of our purpose and priorities. What has God put in your heart to do? Not all plans are God's plans. (ie) I want to start a business. But it fails. Was it God's plan or your plan, or was it God's plan for your to experience disappointment and failure so that He can prepare you for something better.

(ie) Wrong Way Warren – Commodore Thomas Warren in the HMS Windsor 1697

“Stay the Course”

(ie) Abraham Lincoln failed at...

(ie) Patriots, with Mel Gibson, “Stay the course.”

(ie) Adrift – story of a shipwreck and raft at sea for 76 days by Stephen Callahan

(ie) Winston Churchill: *“Never give in--never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”* – Sir Winston Churchill, Speech, 1941, Harrow School,

Most people can't stay the course because they don't know the course or direction of their lives. They have never consulted the map book, the compass, or sextant. They are adrift bounced around by the tyranny of the urgent. Off course – Adrift.

GPS – Global positioning satellite – tracks you at any point on earth at any given moment. You can know where you are in relationship to where you are going. You can check it often to see if you are on course. – Turn Right, recalculating, turn left. The Bible is your guide, roadmap, compass, sextant, GPS system – Check it daily.

What is our course?

What is the course this church, the Grove City Alliance Church is on? Where are we going, and how will we know when we get there? We have set our course based on our purpose and priorities. We simply take those priorities and point our compass, “Set our face toward...” the goal. We state our goal, our plan as “We will do such and such...”

The overall course is set by our purpose (that is true north, our compass), then our priorities refine it (that is map), and finally each year we set our course and sails for the next leg. That is our course setting our heading. What is the next leg?

Conclusion

See the “I Have A Dream (updated)

(ie) Martin Luther King, Jr –

“I have a dream...” speech

“I’ve been to the mountaintop...” speech

God loves to be believed. God loves to show Himself strong on behalf of those who trust Him. God loves to do extraordinary things with ordinary people.

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” - 2 Chronicles 16:9

God has not asked us to do the...

POSSIBLE, FEASIBLE, ATAINABLE, or the PROBABLE

There is no miracle to doing the best we can in our own strength.

If all we ask God to do can be done with a good deal of...

LUCK, HARD WORK, and INGINUITY...

then we are not believing God, we are believing in ourselves.

If we only believe God to do what Pastor Dick can...

HANDLE, MANAGE, or our BUDGET CAN AFFORD...

Then we are not asking God to do it, we are asking Dick to do it.

If we only have faith enough to do the...

POSSIBLE, REASONABLE, DOABLE, ATAINABLE, REACHABLE, REALISTIC, and the NOT OVERBOARD...

Then it’s probably not God’s dream or vision but man’s aspiration.

I believe God wants to raise up a mighty Church. He has enough small, impotent, troublesome, ineffective, and poor little churches where everything is safe and reasonable.

When they came to the Red Sea God said, *“Cross over.”*

When they came to the Jordan River God said, *“Get to the other side.”* He did not say build a boat, build a bridge, or go around it.

When Peter faced Jesus walking on the rough sea Jesus said, *“Get out of the boat. If you want a miracle you have got to get out of the boat and get your feet wet.”*

When Jesus faced 5,000+ hungry people he said, *“Feed them.”* Not take up an offering and go buy bread, not put it on a credit card, not whip up something possible, feasible, doable. He said, ***“Give me what you have, I CAN!”*** So with 5 loaves and 2 small fish and he fed them.

God is not about doing feasible things, leave that to the faithless and unbelieving, the humanists, secularists and rationalists.

But to His children he says, **“Fear not little flock, it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,”**

Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.
Psalms 78:41 – READ PSALM 78 TODAY!

With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.
Matthew 19:26 READ ALL THE MIRACLES GOD HAS DONE!

Vision: “I Have A Vision!”

6. Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few." 7. "Do all that you have in mind (in your heart)," his armor-bearer said. "Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul." – 1 Samuel 14:7 NIV

God loves to be believed. God loves to show Himself strong on behalf of those who trust Him. God loves to do extraordinary things with ordinary people. "*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.*" - 2 Chronicles 16:9 KJV

I have a vision of a God who can...

1. **Children's Ministries**: I have a vision of a God who can... take the Sunday School and Children's Ministries and turn them into a power evangelism tools until it exceeds in impact and greatness the world's best offerings to our children; better than Sesame Street, better than Dora, better than Baby Einstein, better than Barney, better than Disney! It is not a competition to be the best but it is a contest for the minds and hearts of our little ones.

(I have a vision of a children's program that will excel in every area so that children will wake up on Sunday mornings so excited about going to church that they will drag their parents out of bed. God can do it! He is looking for a man or woman to take that challenge and make our children's ministry not just good, but the best it can be for the King of Kings!)

2. **Youth Ministries**: I have a vision of a God who can...take a youth group of six and take it to sixty in four years, who can take that 60 and turn it into 600 in 10 years. I believe in a God who can revolutionize and mobilize a generation be it gen-x, gen-y, or gen-z, and turn their communities upside down.

(I have a vision of a youth facility that will be twice the size our present sanctuary, and be packed with 600 wild-eyed, fanatically-in-love-with-Jesus teens, worshipping God and committing their lives, fortunes, and futures to him.)

3. **College Ministries**: I have a vision of a God who can...take and shake the world through our college students both here at Grove City College and Slippery Rock University and beyond. I believe in a God who can change lives and nations through wholly surrendered college students. It happened a

century ago (1906 Haystack Prayer Meeting) and it changed the world for a century, and it can happen again.

*Two years ago I began to ask God for greater things. **I am asking God if he would entrust to us 10% of SRU. Do the math – that's 800 students!***

What will we do with them? Where will we put them? I don't know. That's God's problem. He will give us the plan step by step but he asks us to get a heart as big as his heart and care about them. I believe God wants to impact the nations through college students that encounter him in these influential years. God wants to raise up an army of spiritual giants, totally sold out, completely surrendered, Spirit-filled, on-fire flaming evangelists for God who will cross the oceans, and live cross-culturally sanctified lives that will impact nations with the Gospel of Christ. They will be passionate worshipers, prevailing pray-ers, potent evangelists, and powerful disciplined disciples.

(We are bringing in Don Piper next October. This is a sample of what we would like to do bringing in name recognized Christian apologist [Josh McDowell, Ravi Zacharias, Dinesh D'Souza, or Lee Stroble] to lecture and debate in a secular environment. I want us to be the catalyst and sponsors of such debates.) Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and Christopher Hitchens – atheist debaters.

4. **A Praying Church**: I have a vision of a God who can...change us into a praying and worshiping church so on fire for God that its light, its impact will reach Pittsburgh and Erie. It will be a place of God-seekers, and prayer warriors who are trained to seek the Lord and lay siege to heaven's gates and hell's graveyards. We will pray for our communities and environs so as to make it hard to go to hell from Grove City.

I believe we are to be a House of prayer and a nation of intercessors. I believe we will pray and God will respond; - Lives will be changed, demons will cry out and flee, disease and sickness obey God's command, marriages will be healed and restored, souls will be saved, money will be provided beyond our wildest imaginations. (Ephesians 3:20)

(I see our prayer room used 24/7. I see us building prayer cottages on the lower wooded end of our property for people to use to get alone with God for extended periods of prayer. I am personally committing myself to a life of prayer. You may see less and less of me in the office that He might see more and more of me before the throne. Seven day fasts.)

5. **Christ-Centered Small Groups**: We need a proliferation of godly leaders who love God supremely and care about people. They will be shepherds and caregivers. This cannot be a one-man or two-man church. We need a virtual army of disciplers and shepherds who will fulfill Christ's command to teach all that Jesus taught us. We need a proliferation of **Christ-centered small groups** meeting regularly for prayer, fellowship, encouragement, and exhortation in the Word. Of our 600 adults only about 100 attend a weekly bible-prayer-fellowship. That's not enough. It cannot be done by a few it will take **the many**.

(I see the day when every man, woman and child will hunger and thirst for the Word of God that we will have to put people on waiting lists to get into a vibrant small group. I envision the day there will be 10 groups for every 100 attendees.)

6. **Expanded Shepherding Ministry**: I have a vision of a God who can...raise up an **army of godly men and women to lead and shepherd the flock**. **We will need one elder for every 50 people** in attendance, not one elder for every 50 in average attendance, but one for every 50 calling this their church home. **That means we need 16 elders right now**.

(I am praying for an army of men and women who will be SHEPHERDS, care givers to this flock. We need to do as Moses instructed to appoint captains over 1000s, 100s, 50s, and 10s. Only then can we really love, care, and know a flock this big. If there were a care group with a shepherd for every 10 families we would have 30 caring shepherds. If it were for every 10 people we would need 90 shepherds. Shepherds know the sheep, call them by name, feed them in their homes, pray with them when they hurt, and love them til Jesus comes.)

7. **Church Ministry Center**: I have a vision of a God who can...launch us into an **impossible dream of expansion to meet the needs of exponential growth**. God will enable us to become creative in our approach to space and worship services. **I dream of God opening the doors for us to own Born to Run**. What a waste of a huge auditorium in the heart of **Prime Outlets**! Until God provides that or something similar we most likely will need to **de-centralize** with **satellite churches** and worship centers when and where they become available. Each satellite church will have its own infrastructure, worship leaders, and elders in the local setting and will share in the same pastoral preaching via live electronic feeds.

(We cannot let ourselves become slaves to distracting building programs and fundraising. We cannot hinder or stall ministries because of the lack of space. The church is about ministry, not money, and not buildings. God is still the Creator of time and space)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S FAILURES

He failed as a business man - as a storekeeper.

He failed as a farmer - he despised this work.

He failed in his first attempt to obtain political office.

When elected to the legislature he failed when he sought the office of speaker.

He failed in his first attempt to go to Congress.

He failed when he sought the appointment to the United States Land Office.

He failed when he ran for the United States Senate.

He failed when friends sought for him the nomination for the vice-presidency in 1856.

Losses and Failures

He was born on a bed of poles covered with corn husks.

1832 Lost job

1832 Defeated for state legislature

1833 Failed in business

1835 Sweetheart died

1836 Had nervous breakdown

1838 Defeated for Speaker

1843 Defeated for nomination for Congress

1848 Lost renomination to Congress

1849 Rejected for land officer

1854 Defeated for U.S. Senate

1856 Defeated for nomination for Vice President

1858 Again defeated for U.S. Senate

1860 Elected President

This is not bad for a man many consider to be the greatest president of all and who attended school less than 12 months in his entire life!

- He was born on a bed of poles covered with corn husks.
- 1816 Young Lincoln was saved from [drowning](#) by playmate Austin Gollaher.
- On October 5, 1818 his mother died of '[milk sickness,](#)' a disease contracted by drinking milk from cows which have grazed on poisonous white snakeroot.
- Abraham's sister, [Sarah](#), died in childbirth on January 28, 1828, just three weeks before her 21st birthday. Sarah was buried with her baby boy who was stillborn.
- Lincoln's son, "Eddie," died on February 1, 1850
- On February 20, 1862 "Willie" Lincoln died in the White House of typhoid fever