

It seems like many pastors come up with their own idea about where a church should go. I try hard to be sure we are heading in the direction God wants us to go. My own idea of what I personally would want here would be slightly different than where we are headed right now. But, that is how it should work with any pastor, and for that matter, any of the people in the church. We don't come up with our own vision. We do not come up with our own plan, then ask God to bless it. He is in charge, and we follow what HE wants us to do.

In any given community, I believe, there should be a variety of churches that are uniquely different than the other churches. Each one should allow God to make them what He wants them to be so that the variety of people in this world can find their place called home.

Here is where I believe we are going, as I understand it now.

I. We need to equip all of our people (every single person) to be effective for God.

But, this involves things that only you can control. I can only emphasize its importance:

1. Every person spending time with God so they can be led by Him.

B.P.Q.C. - **B**ible reading, **P**rayer, **Q**uiet time to hear from God, and **C**hurch.

When you read or hear the following verse, what comes to your mind?

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Do you think totally about God wants to do for you, mainly how He wants to bless your life?

Will God bless us? Yes, but mostly when we serve Him, when we understand we are here to do HIS will, when we understand that we are here on earth to first seek what He wants (His kingdom) then all the other things (blessings) will happen to us. ([Matt 6:33](#))

I am so glad this next verse is in the bible. It is such a profound thought. It is what Mordecai said to Queen Esther:

Esther 4:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴**b** Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"

Queen Esther could have just thought about herself. She could have arrogantly

thought "Look at me, I am now the queen." I do not believe she was ever like that.

And, Mordecai also understood that anything that happens to us, that God has some kind of purpose for each of us.

He said "**who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?**"

Put your self into that question. "Who knows but that God has you right where He wants you for such a purpose as this?"

Ask yourself "Do I know I have a purpose ordained by God for such a time as this?"
"Do I know I need to constant try to hear God and be led by Him?"

Jesus is our example of how we are supposed to live. Look at what Jesus said in:

[John 6:38](#) (NKJV)

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, **not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.**

If that is the way Jesus saw life, why do we think we get to live any different than that? Why do we try to make life just about our own plans?

We have been born for a purpose, and that is to do the will of the Father. We all have an assignment. That assignment starts with changing our view that our relationship with God is all one-sided, what He will do for you by His blessings. You have been born to do His will. That involves a two-sided relationship.

[John 4:34-35](#) (NKJV)

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is **to do the will of Him who sent Me, & to finish His work.**

Then Jesus follows that comment by applying the same idea to His disciples, that they have a work to do. Look at verse 35.

³⁵ Do you not say, '**There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest**'? **Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!**

Really, there is nothing much greater than reaching the lost, another follower of God.

When we look at the Vision of our church:

- We have to understand the purpose of our being on earth. We all have an assigned job to do.
- We have to see that **if** we are not regularly guided by God, we cannot do what He wants us to be doing. We won't be doing our assigned job. We won't even hear Him.
- We must also understand that each of us are totally capable of messing up God's will when we do our own thinking, and make our own decisions. This should drive us to be sure He is always the one directing us.

2. Every person looks for opportunities to witness (as God opens the door).

The important words here are "**looks for opportunities.**" We have to have it on our mind enough to be looking wherever we are at - grocery store, restaurant, basically anytime we are around other people. If we do not look, because looking is hardly ever on our mind, we will rarely witness. Looking means watching for opportunities. God will open the door. We just have to be watching for it. Then we say, or do, only what He wants us to say, or do. ALL of us can witness. Pray about the opportunities, and always be looking for it.

Proverbs 3:5-7 (NKJV)

- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And **lean not on your own understanding;**
- ⁶ **In all your ways acknowledge Him,** And *(then)* **He shall direct your paths.**
- ⁷ **Do not be wise in your own eyes;** Fear the LORD and depart from evil.

3. People in the church need to make sure they never view the church with a one-sided view - that the church is here to mainly help and bless them. Church is a 2 sided relationship, just like our relationship with God is meant to be.

Each person understands they must always be a part of a unified group of people.

What I have occasionally found with some people is they want to be treated like a king or queen. They want the church to chase after them. They have in their mind what they think the church should be doing for people. If the church treats them good enough, then they will come. If they miss a Sunday they think the church should chase after them.

What I have seen with these kind of people is I never see them checking on people who miss. In fact, most of them do not even know the people in the church well enough to know what they are going through. They are not here enough to know about others.

It is very selfish way to view the church. And, the chances are high that most of these people are never going to pull their own weight in the church, anyway. And, chances are even higher that if they view their church that way, they also view God that way. "God is there to help me, and I am just supposed to appreciate it. I don't have to make myself available to God to do what He wants me to do." I personally believe there's a direct relationship with people's view of their church and their view of God.

Every person needs to see that they are responsible, in some way, to be helping. We do not have a one-sided view of God, and we do not have a one-sided view of the church.

The pastor cannot control any of these first 3 things in Point I, because they involve other people making their own decisions. All I can do is emphasize each of these. But, I can tell you this, each of these first 3 things is part of what I believe is God's vision for our church. AND, it will make a huge difference on how great our church is

Our 2nd major point (and vision) today is we need to:

II. Continue to develop worship services making sure they are very meaningful, where we can always feel God's Holy Spirit. Services should always encourage us, but they should also challenge us to change our thinking, to correct things that hinder us, to keep wanting to do God's will in their lives.

A LOT of what the church must do every week is to have great worship service experiences for the congregation.

1. I believe that our music, & our sermon time, have both greatly improved over the years since I have been here. And, I believe it will get even better.

But, we have to continue to allow God to be the one to guide us, or it will not be good, or we will not keep improving. If God is not the one guiding us, it will become just entertainment, which is something that does not make us better for God.

I would love to see God send us more people who play various instruments that we do not currently have. I, personally, would love to see many bluegrass instruments. But, I also would love to see unique instruments like a violin and even a cello. The sound of those 2 together is incredible. If we were big enough, I would love to have an entire orchestra. You rarely ever see that in a church. They add soooo much to the music. But, whatever God wants to bring us, with whatever musicians and singers, is fine with me.

2. We have to see our church as a unique work of God.

This is so important to the vision of our church.

What does God want us to do with our services, our music, and even our preaching that will be different than other churches? In other words, What will be different about our church than other churches?

I do not have any desire to be a mini version of James River Assembly, or The Well. First of all, we will never do as good of a job at that, anyway. We do not have the huge amount of talented people that they have. We have good talent, but not as much as the big churches.

We need to be what God is calling US to be. We have to see ourselves as a unique work of God.

Why is that a big deal? Because it will determine WHO comes here, who we attract, who God wants us to attract.

We need to be most interested in attracting the people God wants here, not just gaining lots of people. *Who will God send here that we can help to be better, and more effective God? But, also, who will come that can help us, as well?*

A lot of who we will attract has to do with:

- 1.) The style of our music. It must be what God wants, and be what people are probably not going find at too many other churches.

Someone might say "Well, this worked at my other church." I don't care. We need to be what God wants us to be. We can look at other ideas, test them to see if its what God wants here, but the bottom line is if it is not what God wants here, we do not want to do it. We want to be what He wants us to be.

- 2.) The preaching, or teaching, style of the pastor is important to the entire picture. God made me to be a teacher. My mind is constantly looking at "*How can I explain things so that people understand it easily, and they will see the need to do it? What can I say to make people more effective for God?*"

We lost one older man, who rarely came anyway, because he wanted a preacher who was more old-fashioned. I have no clue what he meant. *Do I not pound on the pulpit enough for him? Try to make people feel bad every Sunday?* You sure cannot be any more biblical than me. 80% of the time I stay in one passage of scripture and talk about every verse of that passage of scripture.

Granted, sometimes you have to bounce around in a sermon with using various scripture verses. It depends on the topic of the sermon. For example, if I did a

sermon on peace, I would need to look at many different verses that talk about peace. I would call those type of sermons a "topical sermon."

Here is something you may not have ever thought about. The easiest way to deceive people, or make people believe a one-sided view on something is for a minister to constantly be quoting all different bible verses. That style of preaching gives you no "context" of the verse that is being quoted. It is very easy to then quote a verse that does not really mean what the preacher is trying to convince you it means. A preacher, who uses that method, could convince you of about anything. And, the people who attend there I'm sure will tell all your friends how biblical their preacher is because he quotes bible verses all the time.

But, the real question is "What is the context of those verses he is quoting?" In other words, "what is going on in that passage of scripture, and does it really mean what the preacher is trying to convince you it means.

So, if I do a topical sermon, like preach on fear, or anxiety, I DO have to bounce around using lots of verses. But, that kind of sermon has one main emphasis, and that is to help you understand what the entire bible has to say on a particular topic. With those, it is hard to have any distortion in it. The variety of verses add to the strength of that sermon.

MOST of the time, I like to preach with one main passage of scripture whereby we look verse by verse at what is being said. You can see the context of what is going on. You can tell I am not distorting anything.

I preach the way God has made me. I am more of a teacher, than a preacher. And I work hard at never distorting anything. Plus, if there is something I am talking about that I am not sure about, I will tell you that "I am not sure, but this is what I think." I hope the way I preach or teach is unique to our church. I hope it is something that is hard to find somewhere else. I am not saying I hope it is better than everywhere else. I am saying I hope it is different than most places. It is part of our uniqueness.

The other thing I believe God wants here that is unique is:

- 3.) The personable atmosphere on a Sunday morning, and the fact that we are not a "Hi, Good to see you," church. We want to love each other with God's love here. What we want is to see is God coming through the lives of every person in this church. With that, we will always emphasize showing honor and respect to each other, which the bible talks about a lot. Most churches hardly ever mention the importance of honor and respect.

All churches say they are friendly. *How are we different than many churches?* We are personable, we are like your 2nd family, and in order to accomplish that

we have to sincerely take an interest in each person's life. To be effective at that we have to be spending time with each other. This is why our fellowship time is 30 minutes every Sunday before church. This way we can ask things like "How was your week?" Or even "Anything I can help you pray about?" Or even making plans to do something together.

How many churches have time before their services to be able to do that? If you do less than that, then you become a "Hi, How are you?" church, where no one really knows anyone. We want to get to know each other. We don't want a situation whereby people are coming and no one had a clue all they have been going through lately. So, those become come in, then leave never getting any help.

In a "Hi, good to see you church," that can easily happen. But, here we want time to talk to ask "*How was your week?*" We want time to at least know a little about what people are troubled about. This is an important part of who we are. We are true friends and like family, and we mean that. It is not fake. It is something that truly makes us different than most places.

So, again, we have to find what GOD wants us to do. The things I have talked about so far today are unique. We want our music unique, our preaching unique, and our closeness to be unique.

There is an old saying that I think we can apply to churches "When two of you are the same, one of you is not needed." We do not want to be like other churches. Because, then one of the churches is not needed.

III. The ministry that God has given me, up to this point, has involved a lot to do with creating relationships that are like close family. Everyone is important. Everyone needs to contribute.

And, the other ministry God has given me is that we have to be mature and not have bad attitudes, not gossip, etc. We do not want in our church, the kind of things that damage the unity of the church, that damage the family atmosphere here.

I have personally seen that many of the people (not all) who have left this church, have failed the test of attitudes. I have always preached about attitudes. I always make comments about about humility vs pride because it has to do with attitudes. I preach a lot about respect and honor because it has to do with attitudes and unity. Most of the people who left mad, heard all those same sermons, and yet never changed. Most eventually got mad at something, or became a constant criticizer, thereby failing the test.

My personal opinion is I don't want to be in an atmosphere of disunity. The world is full of that garbage. Church is our family. It should be a safe place where people show grace

to each other, overlooking the small things, letting God love through us, and keeping out the attitudes of Satan. Yes, we can butt heads occasionally, but the difference is we will get past it like a brother and sister would get past it. We will not make it worse than it ever was. We will not involve other people in with our frustrations, and we will continue to love each other.

I don't want hatred in my home life, and I don't want it in the church I attend. I would rather if people want to be like that, that they either get right with God, or go somewhere else.

Unity is vital to a church's effectiveness for God. Disunity can destroy a church and its effectiveness. Disunity creates an atmosphere for Satan to work in.

Look at what [Proverbs 6](#) says about the things God hates:

[Proverbs 6:16-19](#) (NKJV)

¹⁶ **These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:**

¹⁷ **A proud look, (*pride*) A lying tongue, (*a lot of gossip involves distortions or lies*)
Hands that shed innocent blood, (*false accusations about someone*)**

¹⁸ **A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,**

¹⁹ **A false witness *who* speaks lies, **And one who sows discord among brethren.****

God HATES those things. *What all was a part of that list?* It started with pride. It always does. Then it goes to trying to say things about people that are not true, things that are said to make someone look bad. Then it goes to wicked plans, feet that RUN to do evil. Then, those verses end with talking about lies again. Ultimately, what happens is those people sow discord among God's people.

In this church, we are going to be tough on those who sow discord among the brothers. We are going to work hard at preserving God's loving atmosphere in our church. Those who want to cause problems can either change to become more like God wants them to be, or they can go somewhere else. My thought is I am not going to make room in this church for the 7 things that God hates.

IN Jesus' final prayer before the cross He prayed these words In [John 17:21](#) about His disciples, and really, all future God followers. (disciples)

Jesus prayed:

[John 17:21](#) (NKJV)

²¹ **that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, (*so*) that the world may believe that You sent Me.**

Unity and love increase our reputation in the world that Jesus is real. Jesus is life changing. Jesus is the way to enjoy your life to the fullest. Unity has to be there for us to be effective. And, that is why the closeness of this congregation, keeping that closeness

must be a part of the vision God has for our church.

Summary -

So, you might think "*That's it? That's your total vision?*"

It is for now, until God shows us more of what He wants.

But, look at how big, how important, each of those things are:

I. Equip all of our people (every single person) to be effective for God.

It involves things that only you can control. I can only emphasize its importance:

1. Every person spending time with God so they can be led by Him. B.P.Q.C.

2. Every person looks for opportunities to witness (as God opens the door). So, we teach people how to be a part of bringing others to salvation.

3. Every person stops viewing the church with a one-sided view.

It is part of why we are adding Sunday School starting next week at 9:15 to 10.

II. Continue to develop worship services that are very meaningful, where we can feel God's Holy Spirit, and those services encourage us, as well as challenge us to keep striving to be all God wants us to be.

1. Our music, & our sermon time, have both already greatly improved And, I believe it can get even better. We should never think it's good enough. The entire worship team works hard at being in unity to accomplish that every week.

2. We have to see our church as a unique work of God. This is so important.

What does God want us to do with our services, our music, our preaching that is different than other churches?

A lot of who we will attract has to do with:

1.) The style of our music must be what God wants, and be what people are probably not going find at too many other churches.

2.) The preaching, or teaching, style of the pastor.

3.) The personable atmosphere on a Sunday morning, and the fact that we are not a "Hi, How are you?" church. We will also love each other with God's love here, and show respect and honor to each other, things that are talked about in the

bible a lot.

III. The ministry that God has given me, up to this point, has involved a lot to do with creating a close atmosphere of friends, and a 2nd family, but also keeping out bad attitudes to try to create and keep unity in the church.

Unity is vital to a church's effectiveness for God. Disunity can destroy a church.

The vision I have is that our church will be our 2nd family. And, for some of us it may eventually become their only family. It is part of that 10 close family or friends that I preached about last week.

I have no desire to have conflict in my own home, nor do I ever want it in our church.

See how big are each of those things are? These are not little things. They are big things. And God, over time, I'm sure will add to the vision that He wants us to carry out. But, for now we need to keep getting more effective for Him.

Closing prayer - Lee Conner