



Our Vision

Where is God Taking Us? Week 5

October 7, 2018

LEARNING GOALS

- Understand Bellevue's Vision and the role a vision plays.
- Illustrate how our Vision makes an impact on individuals and Life Groups.

OUTLINE

1. **INTRODUCTION - "WHERE IS GOD TAKING US?" SERIES**
2. **OUR VISION**
 - I. What is Bellevue's Vision?
 - II. What impact does our Vision make on me and my Life Group?

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The goal of our current series "Where is God Taking Us?" is to align our Life Group with the Lord's direction for our church. We are engaging all elements of the Vision Frame. *(Teacher, point to the **Vision Frame storyboard.**)*

Our Vision Frame has four sides that frame where we believe God is taking our church. These sides define **what** we are doing, **why** we do what we do, **how** we get involved, and **when** we are on target. The center of the frame is our Vision, a work of God so wonderful you'll want to be a part of it!

Last week we looked at our Measures that indicate WHEN we are on target at fulfilling our Mission.

(Teacher, point to the Measures aspect of the storyboard.)

This week's lesson focuses on Bellevue's Vision which defines WHERE God is taking us. *(Teacher, point to the Vision aspect of the storyboard.)*

*(Teacher - **Pray** - Thank the Lord for His Presence in your Life Group and for the clear direction He has given our church. Ask God for Spirit-guided teaching and for receptive ears willing to obey the teaching of God's Word.)*

OUR VISION

What is Bellevue's Vision?

Imagine if you were asked to walk through a metal detector when you arrived at Bellevue this morning. This detector, however, is a unique scanner. It does not detect what is in your pocket. Instead, it detects what is in your heart. Specifically, the detector would reveal 'why' you attended Bellevue today.

Not only does this detector reveal what's in your heart, it also displays the 'why you attended' on a public screen. As you watched people enter through the detector, you could view each person's 'why'.

What reasons for attending do you think would appear on the screens?

(Teacher, allow for responses.)

I'd like to read some of the responses that our class members provided in the on-line assessment.

(Teacher, please locate and read responses given from question 10.)

Generally, there are four categories that capture the main reasons people attend a specific church:

1. Pastor – "I love my Pastor and his wife."
2. Place - "I love my church. Being here gives me a sense of God's presence."
3. Programs – "I love all of the programs my church offers."
4. People – "I love the people here. I have made so many friends at my church."

Each of these four categories is a great reason to attend a specific church and is often the initial draw. However, there is a downside to attending for one of these four reasons only. **What could happen over time to any of these four?**

(Teacher, listen for responses.)

They could change! One or more of these could change during your time at Bellevue.

By show of hands, has anyone had more than one Senior Pastor at Bellevue?

Who have been your Senior Pastors at Bellevue?

Again, by show of hands, who has experienced a part of the church building you frequent being remodeled?

Can you give an example of which area and remodel?

Thirdly, since your time here, raise your hand if a program, event, or offering has either stopped or a brand new program, event, or offering has started?

Which programs, event, or offerings were stopped or started?

Finally, by show of hands, who has had a close friend who attended Bellevue move away or is no longer here?

These four reasons could easily be identified as *provision*. “The Lord has provided me a great church with a Bible-preaching pastor, a beautiful place to worship, engaging programs, and really nice people.”

We naturally make strong connections to this type of provision. However, any or all of these four could change.

At Bellevue, we want to focus beyond these four categories. We want to develop a deeper connection with and focus on where God is taking us together.

Having a vision of where you are going is powerful.

Who in the room today has ever taken a cruise?

Imagine you are on a cruise to your dream destination. The cruise director invites you to take a rare tour of the Captain’s Deck. The captain greets you and walks you into a large room of computer screens, radar displays, instrument panels, control switches, and power gauges. You look intently at the important equipment used to steer the ship. Then, the captain taps you on the shoulder and points your attention outward to where the ship is headed. On the horizon, you see your dream destination straight ahead!

Although it was informative to learn how the ship is steered, it was more inspiring and rewarding to finally see where you have always wanted to go!

In this illustration, the captain and the equipment symbolize the **mission that informs**. Your dream destination symbolizes the **vision that inspires**. Mission is doing what it takes to get somewhere while vision is the ability to see where you want to go!

Our Vision pictures where we are going and gets us excited. Believing our Vision gives us the boldness and energy to take risks, to stretch us, and to give clear direction.

Can anyone quote Bellevue's Vision?

(Teacher, point to our Vision statement in red at the far right end of the storyboard. By reviewing the responses to question 9 from the assessment, you will likely see the value in bringing clarity to how our Vision reads.)

Our Vision to be a Catalyst for Spiritual Awakening in Memphis and beyond brings clarity to where we believe God is taking us. We want you to call Bellevue home because of the Vision of what is to come more than for those things that can change.

Looking ahead is what a vision is all about! A vision is inspiring. It's seeing. It's believing. It's a state of breathlessness that creates energy and moves us to take risks.

The Lord utilizes vision to keep His people moving forward.

Turn to Deuteronomy 8.

In this chapter God is speaking with His people who He led into the desert. This wilderness experience taught them obedience and to trust in Him.

The Lord casts vision of what is to come when He welcomes His people into the Promised Land.

(Teacher, consider allowing someone to read this text aloud.)

Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Deuteronomy 8:6-10

How could these words have inspired the Israelites? Describe some of the vision language that God used in v. 7-9.

(Possible responses include: God was bringing them into a good land. There would be plenty of food. They would be satisfied.)

God shared an inspiring picture of what was to come! Although they couldn't see the vision as a reality yet, their excitement grew because they believed God could see it.

Similarly, in the New Testament, Jesus gave a glimpse of what is to come.

Jesus' disciples had been sent to preach and heal, they had participated in the feeding of the 5,000, and they had absorbed much teaching from Jesus. Jesus chose this very busy time to pull his three closest disciples together. He encouraged them by sharing a vision of heaven's glory.

Turn to Luke 9.

(Teacher, consider inviting someone to read this text aloud.)

"But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. Luke 9:27-32

What did Peter, James, and John see and hear that they had not seen nor heard before?

(Teacher, allow for responses.)

These three disciples saw Jesus in His glorified state. They had never seen Him this way before and the experience must have blown their minds! They also saw and heard Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus about what is to come. These Old Testament heroes, whose bodies were never found, also had a heavenly appearance. Peter, James, and John quickly realized they were experiencing a Kingdom setting—a vision of what is to come.

Our Vision at Bellevue is similar. It gives us a picture of what we believe God is going to do through us in Memphis and beyond!

Let's talk about our Vision at Bellevue.

Let's all say it together.

(Teacher, lead the class in quoting our Vision out loud: Our Vision is to be a catalyst for spiritual awakening in Memphis and beyond.)

What is a catalyst?

(Teacher, allow for responses.)

Bro. Steve defines **catalyst** the following way: an agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action.

An everyday example of a catalyst producing change or action involves your washing machine and a new white shirt that took in more gravy than your mouth.

Starch-based stains are not water-soluble. Hot water and a washing machine agitator will likely not produce enough energy to remove the stain. The most effective solution includes the addition of a catalyst—commonly referred to as laundry detergent.

In this example, the laundry detergent contains enzymes that act as a catalyst. The detergent bonds to and breaks down starch-based stains like...you guessed it...gravy! Once broken down, the stain molecules are easily lifted from the shirt by the water and removed in the spin cycle.

The stain removal required a catalyst, the laundry detergent, to bring about change (a clean white shirt). In the same way, we are asking the Lord to use us as His catalyst to bring change to Memphis and beyond through a spiritual awakening.

Just as a catalyst (laundry detergent) was needed to bring about change (a clean white shirt), a catalyst is needed to bring about change (a spiritual awaking) in Memphis and beyond. We are asking the Lord to use us as His catalyst!

How would you describe a spiritual awakening?

(Teacher, allow for responses.)

Essentially, spiritual awakening means revival. Bro. Steve defines **revival** as “the glory of God filling the house of God.”

Our nation has experienced six large-scale spiritual awakenings.

(Teacher, consider printing these bullet points in advance and invite a different person to read one aloud.)

- The First Great Awakening took place in the northeast from the early to mid 1700s resulting in thirty to forty thousand new converts and 150 new churches.
- In the early 1800s on a small college campus in Virginia, the Lord started what is now referred to as the Second Great Awakening. This movement of God spread from college campuses to tent meetings to churches. In Rochester, New York alone, 100,000 were saved and 40 men surrendered to the Gospel ministry including several missionaries. The whole community was stirred, as religion was the topic everywhere. Liquor stores were closed, the church grew, and crime was greatly reduced.
- The Prayer Revival of 1858 sent shock waves across the entire nation. A Manhattan businessman started a prayer time at noon each day that grew from one person to ultimately 50,000 meeting daily in New York alone. Within two years, revival had swept the entire nation and approximately one million people were added to churches.
- The early 1900s saw God move through traveling evangelists in large area-wide crusades where millions heard the Gospel and thousands were saved.
- After World War II, God’s work on college campuses and crusades again riveted our nation. During this time Bill Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ and Billy Graham began his ministry in large arenas. In New York alone, over a period of 16 weeks, Graham’s crusade drew two million listeners and 55,000 were saved. Churches experienced tremendous growth and renewed spiritual zeal.
- In the 1960s, from coffeehouses along the West Coast, the Jesus Movement produced a genuine spiritual awakening among the youth of America. Following this movement, Southern Baptist churches experienced the greatest number of baptisms in a consecutive five-year period resulting in more than 400,000 people being saved and baptized!

The same Lord who sent the previous revivals is able to send revival in current times!

Our Pastor hungers to see revival in his lifetime and we should as well. We prayerfully expect the Lord to send a revival in Memphis and beyond.

What impact does Our Vision make on me and my Life Group?

Who might the Lord use as His catalysts?

We believe we are the catalyst! Sticky reminds us, "It starts in me!" We can't make Memphians get on fire for Jesus but that fire can start in us.

God chooses to do His work through His people! The Lord has always used His people as catalysts for spiritual awakening.

In the Old Testament God used kings, priests, and prophets.

In the New Testament God used disciples, deacons, and church workers.

Today, He empowers you to fulfill His mission. God wants to use you, and us as a church, as His catalyst for spiritual awakening.

Consider our Adult Life Group Ministry at Bellevue. There are, at the time of this writing, 142 Adult Life Groups with nearly 5,000 members. That's 142 catalytic platoons in God's army seeking victory for the Kingdom of God!

So what do we do? What can we do? We can pray for spiritual awakening. We can believe God desires to bring awakening again. We can speak of our Vision for spiritual awakening often.

As you pray, believe, and speak of spiritual awakening, consider the following conversation that Jesus had with his disciples prior to the cross. He gathered with the twelve in an "upper room."

Turn in your Bibles to Mark 14.

(Teacher, have someone read verses 12-16.)

*On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' And he himself will show you a large **upper room** furnished and ready; prepare for us*

there." The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

It was in this "upper room" setting where Jesus washed His disciples' feet, comforted them, warned them, taught them, and prayed over them. He also painted a picture of what life would be like when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and when they experience their future glory.

It was in this "upper room" where Jesus cast a vision of what was to come.

Consider the term "upper room" as you consider more visionary concepts. This perspective adjusts your view of your prayer life, your faith, and your language beyond the here-and-now to a more visionary hope for spiritual awakening. As you alter your perspective, you can begin taking others to the "upper room" with you.

If someone asks why you attend Bellevue, instead of settling for a "lower room" conversation such as, "I'm here because of the pastor, place, programs, and people," consider a step up. Take your "lower room" conversation to the "upper room."

Speak with visionary language. Describe what you see God doing here, how He is at work, and how He is leading our church to be a catalyst for spiritual awakening.

You can be an everyday visionary as you share with others how God is preparing to do a new work at Bellevue.

We can learn a lesson from farmers on how to most effectively broadcast a message. In the absence of rain, farmers use two types of irrigation for their crops. Sprinklers can spray water across large areas. Drip irrigation steadily delivers drops of water to a specific location. Farmers have learned that 40 gallons of water dripped is as effective as 100 gallons of water cast from a sprinkler. Because so much water gets lost in the atmosphere when sprinkling, water dripping is more effective.

Likewise, vision dripping is more effective than vision casting.

If we truly believe that our Vision to be a catalyst is a better perspective than the four categories, we should engage in conversations using "upper room" language. Rather than highlight our church programs, for example, let's talk about God's work in and

through our church. Let's share what we're praying for, dreaming about, working on, and desiring to see God do in our city.

In closing, let's accept the challenge from this take home worksheet.

(Teachers, give out the worksheet provided.)

Please turn to the side that says, "Praying for Spiritual Awakening." Begin to pray for spiritual awakening using the three texts provided:

- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Joel 2:12-13
- Isaiah 64:1

(Teacher, consider asking for a volunteer to read the texts aloud.)

Now, flip the card over. This week, as you seek the Lord, please take time to write what you imagine could be said years after a spiritual awakening occurred in Memphis. Use visionary language, hope-filled words, and inspiring details of life change.

Bring your card back next week. We look forward to hearing some of your insights.

Thank you for being part of this Life Group and of Bellevue's Vision!

(Teacher, close in prayer.)

Gaines, Steve. When God Comes to Church (used a reference)

Compiled by Tim Shelton with Stacey Berretta