

A New Future – Vision Sunday
Pastor Joe Oakley
GFC – 1-20-19

Welcome to Vision Sunday!

We are in a new sermon series entitled All Things New. It's based on Revelation 21:3 where God says, "*Behold, I make all things new.*"

But first, I want to share a few of our accomplishments from last year and vision for 2019.

We have an overall vision for our church – which is Touching Heaven-Changing Earth. To accomplish our vision we do four things: experience God's presence, equip God's people, extend God's kingdom and empower the next generation for Jesus Christ. When we do this – we touch heaven and change earth.

Here's just a few statistics about how we accomplished that in 2018.

- We had 498 first-time guests
- Our attendance and our offerings grew by 5%
- We had 220 people volunteer to serve in some capacity.
- Hundreds of people were discipled through Grace Journey, Bible classes, FPU, children's, youth, men's and women's ministries.
- We started a new ministry called Grace Latino.
- Over 700 people came to our church during Light the Night.
- We supported 12 missionaries and mission's organizations ministering in 13 nations around the world. Added BESTWA - Liberia
- Supported mission's trips to El Salvador, Thailand, Liberia and Guinea
- Donated thousands of dollars to build Grace Place in Thailand
- In benevolence – we gave money, food and gifts to over 100 people.
- Here's the main one: 105 people made professions of faith in Jesus!
- Dozens more rededicated their lives to Christ, dozens more got water baptized and dozens more got baptized in the Holy Spirit!

Thank you for helping to make this happen by praying, giving and serving.

Even though we have an overall vision to guide us, there is always the need for fresh vision in our church. Proverbs 29:18 says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish.*

Last year our theme was Going Deeper – Going Higher.
 So, we went deeper in worship and in the Word.

We started calling the Wednesday sanctuary class The Deeper Life.
 We had classes on The School of the Prophets and The School of the Spirit.
 This year we are starting off with the School of Healing.

We really want a supernatural culture at Grace Fellowship Church. That's why we are equipping people to hear God and operate in the gifts of the Spirit and pray for the sick.

In addition to growing deeper – we want to grow higher by reaching more people. Growing churches make outreach a priority!

There are two specific groups that felt led to reach out to last year. First, we started Grace Latino to reach out to Hispanics, who are the largest people group in Grand Prairie.

We also felt led to make next generation ministry a priority.

- We worked to improve our children's and youth ministries, including upgrading the classrooms.
- We hired Chandler Buck as our youth pastor
- Began young adult / millennial ministry

This year our theme will be "It's Time to Build." The elders feel this is a year for building at GFC. Hopefully, that will include an actual building. But the church is not a building.

We must be about the business of building the church – the people of God – no matter what building we occupy. We feel led to teach through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which deal with the Israelites returning to their land and rebuilding the temple and the city walls.

Their progression in building the temple is an example to us.

They started by building an altar first.

Then they laid the foundation of the temple.

Then they built the house of God.

So – we will be focusing on building an altar in our individual lives, our families and our church.

We will focus on laying a foundation in our lives, our families and our church.

We will focus on the structure and relationships of our church.

We will continue to raise up 5-fold ministers to equip the saints.

We will work to raise up more small groups to facilitate relationships.

Concerning outreach, we will continue to work to grow Grace Latino and our next Gen ministries.

So, our major areas of focus this year will be:

- 1- Implementing the 5-fold ministry in our church
Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers

- 2- We want to begin establishing a school of ministry based on the 5-fold ministry.
So, eventually that will include a School of the Prophets, a School of Evangelism, a School of Pastoral Ministry, a School of Teachers and a School of Apostolic Ministry – which is basically leadership.
That's long-term vision. We are beginning In March by having a college level course in Hermeneutics – principles of Bible interpretation – taught by Awilda Babb.
- 3- Grace Groups
We see the need to reestablish the importance of small groups in the life of our church. They are vital to discipleship, equipping, raising up leaders and building relationships.
- 4- Freedom Ministry
This is a ministry designed to help people get free and stay free from addictions and life-controlling problems like anger, depression and past wounds. This will occur one on one, in small groups and in what we call freedom weekends where intensive ministry happens.
- 5- Family Ministry
We are feeling the need for more ministries for marriages and families. This includes small groups, biblical counseling and marriage mentors. Some of this is long-term vision because it requires equipping people first.

This is what we are seeing for GFC this year. What do you see for your area of ministry? What is your vision for your life and your family? Remember, without a vision you perish.

Last week I taught on how you can have A New Past.
Today I'm preaching on how to have A New Future.

Last week learned how to change your view of the past by changing what you believe about your past and what you tell yourself about your past. You can receive God's forgiveness for what you've done in the past and forgive those who've hurt you in the past and renounce inner vows you've made in the past and renew your mind about the past – and when you do that, your past will be made new.

We also learned that when your past is still harming you or holding you back in the present – it's really not the past, is it? It's the present. And if you don't deal with it properly and biblically – it will be your future!

So, just as our past impacts us in the present – it can also impact our future. Usually it's failure from the past that impacts us in the present. And it's fear of the future that also impacts us today. Both faith and fear hold us back in life! We must overcome that if we want a new future!

I was praying about this message this week – and God gave me this: Most people look at the future through eyes of fantasy or fatalism instead of looking at the future through eyes of faith!

Some people look at the future through the eyes of fantasy.
It's a made up, make-believe, imaginary future.

Some people look at the future through the eyes of fatalism.
They think “whatever will be will be” so why try?

People with a fantasy view of life get easily disappointed, so they give up on their dream, give up on life and many times, give up on God. As a result, they usually accomplish very little.

People with a fatalistic view of life have little ambition or expectation. They are resigned to whatever happens which results in passivity. As a result, they also usually accomplish very little!

What we really need is not fantasy or fatalism, but faith for our future.
Our faith needs to be in the God who holds the future in His hands.
Our faith needs to press us into seeking God for His plans for us.
Our faith needs to hear from God and do what He says!
Our faith needs to believe God for big things and trust Him with the results and the timing.

We need to have a dream and a vision from God for our future, but many people have a fantasy instead of a dream.

A dream is from God – but a fantasy is self-made
A dream will glorify God – but a fantasy glorifies self

Proverbs 12:11 says: *He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.*

The New Living Translation says: *A hard worker has plenty of food, but a person who chases fantasies has no sense.*

Other versions call fantasies unrealistic dreams, empty dreams or daydreams.
Evidently, there's a difference between a dream and a daydream.
There's a difference between a dream and a fantasy.

I looked up the word fantasy and it means a creation in the mind that is disconnected from reality. It exists in the mind only! One of the meanings is also “to appear.” And that's what a fantasy is – expecting something to just appear out of nowhere. I think way too many people think that their dream will just one day appear. There's nothing they can do to make it happen, except maybe pray. They think that if it's God's will it will just happen.

But the message of Proverbs 12:11 that accomplishing your dream takes hard work!

Part of that hard work is getting the vision down on paper.

Part of that work is breaking the vision down into attainable goals.

Part of that work is having a strategic plan to meet your goals.

And a big part of the work is building the team to do the work you have planned to in order meet the goals in order to accomplish the vision.

A dream without goals is a daydream.

A dream without plans is a fantasy.

A dream without work is nothing.

This week we are celebrating Martin Luther King Day. If there is anyone who is known for a dream, it's Dr. King. His most famous speech is the I Have a Dream speech. In that speech he laid out his vision for an American where:

All people are treated equally.

All people are judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin.

The children of former slaves and the children of former slave owners are able to sit down at the table of brotherhood.

But Dr. King did not have a fantasy or a daydream. How do we know that?

Because he did the hard work of accomplishing his dream.

He didn't just have a dream, he imparted vision to everyone he met everywhere he went.

He wrote it down so people could run with it.

He broke the vision down into attainable goals.

He had a strategic plan to accomplish those goals.

And he recruited people and organized them into teams to accomplish the vision.

It's the same for our church, your workplace, your family and your life! What's your vision? What's your dream for your future? If you are like most people, you don't know. The most common answer given when people are asked what their vision for their life is this: "I don't know."

It's sad that most people live their lives not knowing their purpose. They have no dream or vision. They get no closer to the goal because they don't know what the goal is.

I don't believe God wants us to live that way. Everyone ends up somewhere. But few people end up somewhere on purpose. God wants us to live lives of purpose and vision.

Some people are afraid to dream because they might fail. They might not accomplish it. Maybe not, but I can guarantee you this: without a dream you will definitely accomplish nothing! I would rather dream big and believe big and accomplish part of my dream than dream nothing and accomplish all of that.

So - Dare to dream. Dare to get a vision for your future.
 Vision has power. I know that because of the results of a lack of vision.
 Without a dream you will never accomplish anything.
 Without a dream you will not have the strength to try anything.
 Without a dream you will not have the courage to overcome opposition.
 Without a dream you are doomed to failure.
 How do I know? The Bible tells me so.

Proverbs 29:18 says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish.*
 The Hebrew word for vision is chazown (khaw-zone'); which means sight – not literal sight, but a dream, a revelation, or a prophecy. The literal definition of vision is “the power to see.” When I speak of vision today, I mean the power to see your future. So, what do you see for your future? Without a dream you will perish. That’s true in every area of life.

Where there is no vision to have a growing personal relationship with your Creator, your inner man perishes.

Where there is no vision that you have been placed on earth to love other people, you live in loneliness and your relationships perish.

Where there is no vision for a godly family, you have a big chance of ending up divorced and your family perishes.

Where there is no vision that your body is the temple of God’s Spirit—your physical health perishes.

Where there is no vision for a financially wise lifestyle, you can live in the richest country on earth and still be financially perishing.

Where you have no vision for your calling, destiny and purpose, you will flounder around going from job to job with no real accomplishment.

Get the point? Without vision in any area of life, people perish. Without a vision you will end your life in regret wondering: “Why didn’t I accomplish more? Why didn’t I get somewhere? Why didn’t I make something of my life?”

That’s not how God wants us to end up in life. The Apostle Paul got a vision from God, and at the end of his life, he was able to say in Acts 26:19
I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision...

Paul knew he accomplished God’s vision for his life.
 He heard from God and did what God told him to do.
 Have you heard from God? Are you doing what He wants you to do?
 Do you have a dream from God?

I’m not talking about a day dream or a pipe dream – I’m talking about a dream from God!

Here are 10 questions you can ask yourself about your dream:

- 1- Is this dream from God or from other people?
Sometimes the dream is our parent's dream for us, or a teacher's dream for us - not our own dream from God.
- 2- Can I clearly see this dream or is it vague?
- 3- Is this dream realistic or is it a fantasy?
- 4- Do I have the talents, skills and gifts to accomplish this dream?
- 5- Does my dream motivate me or overwhelm me?
- 6- Do trustworthy people validate my dream?
- 7- Have I counted the cost of my dream? Am I willing to pay the price?
- 8- Does my dream fulfill me?
- 9- Does my dream benefit others? It won't be just about you!
- 10- Does my dream glorify God? If not - it's not from God!

To have a new future - we first need a dream. But, there are other things we need like prayer, a plan from God, the power of God and the people of God. Without those things - your dream will not come to pass.

I'm not talking about waiting around for your dream to come true - I'm talking about making your dream come true. I'm talking about living your dream, not living in a dream world!

You might be living your dream or you might have a bunch of broken dreams. In life there are dream killers and dream fulfillers. Dream weavers and daydream believers.

You might have the American dream, or a midsummer night's dream - or you might just be California Dreamin -
You might be dreaming sweet dreams or the impossible dream.
You might be living in a field of dreams in a Dream land in a Dream world.

You may have met the man or woman of your dreams.
You may have a dream team to root for and a dream ticket to vote for.
But do you have a dream of your own to live for?

Ephesians 3:20 says that *God is able to (carry out His purpose) and do superabundantly, far over and above all that we (dare) ask or think (infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams).*

God has a dream for you that is beyond your wildest dream!
God wants to do bigger things through you than you've ever dared to dream of, think of or ask for! God is daring you to dream big today! And I'm calling you out of small-minded thinking - small-faith praying - small-dream living!
And I'm encouraging you to dare to dream and dare to dream big!
With God's plan and God's power - you can have a new future!