

November 22, 2009
Vision Series – What now?

Alright. Thanks for being here today. 12 weeks ago we began what we were calling a 'vision series' together. After 3 or 4 years of doing church together with the vision God had given us to be moving people to life in Christ one step at a time together, God began to flesh that out for us – to set the direction of what church is going to be at Fairway by lining out what the very basic expectations – the basic steps to life in Christ need to be according to His Word.

And because of the importance of what that was going to give us, I did something I rarely do and pulled the senior pastor card and asked you to not only be praying for me and yourself and our family through this series, but to commit not to miss a Sunday unless God tells you not to be here. And this morning we come to the conclusion of that series – at least in some ways.

And to be honest, if you have been here throughout the past months, what you have heard may feel like it sounds like a checklist. That as we looked at the things we feel like the Bible is asking of us – to worship Jesus – to learn truth – to build community – to reach your world – that seems like a checklist you're being asked to do.

Let me just say this today – I want you to understand that we are giving you – and I say we because the staff and deacons have been studying through and praying through this process for over a year before we even started this series – but what we are giving you is what we believe the Bible says are principles that are going to be in our lives if we are Christians. It's that simple – these things are going to be in your life if you rightly claim the name of Jesus. So it is not a checklist – we'll see that in just a moment – but **these steps are what God has laid out as what it means to do LIFE IN CHRIST – to be a disciple** because remember, that's what Jesus defines being a Christian is – a disciple – **those who, out of faith that believes Jesus is who He says He is, set their intent on systematically rearranging their lives in order to BE LIKE JESUS.**

So this morning as we pull all this together, as God shows us one more time how these steps come together to make us the church God wants us to be, remember it is not a checklist – in fact **each of these steps BUILDS on the others in order to move us through life in Christ. If we stop living in an earlier step, the sequential ones will eventually FALL APART.**

To get us started, I want you to go back to Acts chapter 2. This ought to be a very familiar passage by now. But we are going to camp out on one part of the passage that probably is not so familiar. As you turn to Acts chapter 2 verse 40, remember what is going on in what Luke describes there. This is the account of Pentecost. Remember in the gospel of Luke, he tells us that right before Jesus returned to heaven - he told the disciples to return to the city and to wait until they received power from on high. And in Acts chapter 1, Jesus lays it out and says in verse 8, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..."*

What happens in Acts 2 is that very thing. Jesus sends the presence of the Holy Spirit onto and for the first time into His disciples – thing start going crazy – people getting excited – people speaking in languages they didn't know – and in the midst of it all Peter gets up and begins to preach like all get out. And that's where **Acts 2:40** begins.

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What we see there is people who began to go out and live the vision of Jesus together. What I mean by the vision of Jesus is they began to live as the church of God. Think back to **Matthew 16:16-18** where Jesus asked the disciples who they thought he really was verse 16 says:

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Jesus said on the very truth of who I am I am going to bring into existence this entity – this power – this church – and there will be nothing that can stand against it – the very gates of Hell will stand no chance.

And then in **Matthew 28:19** we saw Jesus give the marching orders for that church – His church – when he said *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

And then we just saw in **Acts 1:8** where He promised the power to his church and said *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

That's the vision of Jesus these people were living. They didn't just talk about it – they went out and continually devoted themselves to it – they lived it. And the question I want to ask you this morning is why? Why are they living the vision God gave them?

I think verse 43 of **Acts chapter 2** gives us a clue as to why these people were living out in such a passionate way the vision of Jesus. Look back at verse **42-43A**: *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe."*

Every now and then when the scholars who translate the original Greek manuscripts into English so we can have the Bible in our hands that we are holding today – when they come across a word for word translation that they think we just won't be able to understand – that if they leave it like that we aren't going to get what is being said – they will combine the wording into phrases for us – it doesn't change the meaning, it just puts it in language that connects better with how we think. And rarely in that process the real meat of the Greek words gets lost in the English. And this is kind of one of those times.

See where the NIV has **"and everyone was filled with awe"** the literal Greek would say **"and FEAR was occurring to EVERY soul."** When we hear 'everyone was filled with awe' we think of people looking around at what was happening and going – cool – this is neat – this is awesome. That's not the deal. When the Greek says 'and fear was occurring to every soul' mean that fear – awe – gripped every single human soul in the place – that in that room they began to experience in a personal way – they were moved in the deepest places of who they were by the vision of the church.

They weren't just HEARING the vision – they weren't **just going through the motions** that we so often find ourselves doing. **The scripture says that every single one of them was having an internal, personal, heartfelt CONNECTION with the vision of Jesus Christ.** It went past their heads – it went past their hearts – and it gripped them – the vision of Christ gripped them in the deepest places of our souls - **and it compelled them to LIVE it.**

We've been preaching for the past 11 weeks on the vision of this church – where we are going – what we are about – what we are doing – what the scripture has called us to – and calling every one of you to live out that vision. And what has hit me about the future and the vision of this church is a simple

truth and this is it – you see the reason the 1st century church was so passionately living out the vision of Christ was because the fear of it - what God was doing right in their midst - had gripped their soul and it produced their living it out.

And here's what has hit me: I can preach till I'm blue in the face – I can preach until Jesus Christ comes back – but here's the thing, unless you – unless you – not the person next to you – not me – not the staff – not your husband or wife but you – **unless YOU experience it and sense a personal sense of connection with what our vision is, YOU won't live it out. It's just that simple.**

I know that sounds intuitive – but it just hit me – I can preach all day long but until you connect with it – until you on a personal level begin to feel a sense of awe of what God is calling us to you'll just go about your life and you'll never ever live it. So let me just remind us one more time – what our vision is and I want you to listen with everything you've got. Don't just listen to fill in the blanks today – there is too much worth being on your message map to put it all on there – so listen to it all today.

We are alive for one reason – to GLORIFY God and lift high the name of Jesus Christ. That's it. And the vision that God has given us about how we as His church are to accomplish that is that we exist – you ought to perk up here – we are together for one reason and one reason alone – we exist to move people to LIFE in Christ one step a time TOGETHER.

Our individual tendencies to define the greatness of a church based on how it meets our own wants and our own definitions go out the door here. The traditional idea that a church is successful when it has plenty of money in the bank, has lots of butts in the pews, and has no conflict in the hallways has nothing to do with how Jesus will judge the success of our church.

No what Jesus will look at is are we making disciples – are we moving people to life in Christ one step at a time together. And the steps by which we do that according to His Word begin with worshipping Jesus together. The only way men are moved to glorify Jesus is when Jesus is lifted up as the priority in our words and our works. And the only way Jesus is maintained as our greatest priority is when we worship Him. And that worship is not defined by 5 songs and a greeting time on Sunday morning. That worship is our response to who God is and to what He has done all the time in the words we say and the way we live.

And according to the very Word of God, the corporate expression of that worship incorporates everything we do here – in fact coming together corporately to respond to the greatness of our God is not optional – it is a necessity in the life of a disciple. So if we are going to move people to life in Christ one step a time together, **as a church though we cannot make anyone worship in spirit and truth, we can and we must give consistent opportunities to WORSHIP JESUS together. And that's what we are going to do each and every Sunday morning together. And you need to BE THERE.** You need to build the value of our corporate worship each Sunday through the integrity of your personal worship all week and by letting your personal worship all week be empowered by our corporate worship together on Sunday.

And the natural outflow of giving Jesus the rightful place of preeminence in our lives in worship is that we give His Word its rightful place of authority and truth in our lives as well. God showed us that biblical truth is the relevant message for any culture because of what it is – God's perspective on what is real – because it is truth – not just because of our opinion of it. In fact, we cannot grow as Christians – we cannot do life in Christ – without Bible study. We must learn truth. And what God made clear to us in this series is that the step of learning truth begins with reception – with receiving God's Word – and coming to understand it through meditation and discussion and study. But that is not enough. The process of learning truth only happens when what we receive and understand becomes what we apply and integrate into our lives.

And the reason that is so absolutely crucial in the life of a disciple – so necessary if we are going to do life in Christ – is because the Word of God is the final authority in our lives – it trumps anything and everything else – any other standard – any other opinion – any other tradition or person

out there that comes into conflict with the Word of God falls to its authority in our lives. So if we as God's church are going to move people to life in Christ one step at a time together, again **though as a church we cannot make anyone live in the process of learning God's Word, the next step is that we must give consistent opportunities to LEARN TRUTH together. And that's what we are going to do in Bible study classes for every age every Sunday before our corporate worship service. And you need to BE THERE** – to be learning truth together with the family of believers God has given you in a more intimate and educational setting than 20-30 minutes of me preaching in a worship service.

And I use the phrase there 'the family of believers God has given you' on purpose – because that is exactly what we are. As we study the Word – as we give it its rightful place in our lives – as we learn truth, we cannot help but come to the conclusion that God designed the church family to be an interdependent body of Christ so that we would do life in Christ together – none of us were ever intended to try to do that alone – God never intended anyone to try to be in the church but not of the church.

Instead what God has shown us is that the church – specifically the local expression of the body of Christ – is designed to build biblical community. Centered on the truth of Jesus Christ – being of one mind – having the same love – being one in spirit and purpose – if we are going to move people to life in Christ one step at a time together, we must build biblical community.

We build it first through the honest depth and breadth of our relationships with one another. Practically that means things like we talked about in this series – to think humbly, speak kindly, listen carefully, respond gracefully, forgive freely, share truthfully, and serve namelessly. And the primary way God designed us to build those relationships all around us is by serving as He enabled us. God gives every believer a spiritual gift or gifts that are the channels through which God uses each of us to bring about maturity in the body of Christ.

So if we are going to be a church that moves people to life in Christ one step at a time together – **again we can't force people into relationships – we can't force people to use their gifts and talents and time and resources in the service of one another – but we must give consistent opportunities to BUILD COMMUNITY together. And that's what we are going to do primarily through links on Sunday nights** where relationships are forged through the truth of Jesus Christ and overflow through meeting each others' needs and accountability for involvement in applying God's Word through service to the body of Christ. And guess what? **You need to BE THERE** – risking connection – risking action to build community as the family of God at Fairway.

But the last step that God has shown us that flows out of the previous one – in fact out of all the previous ones – takes us back to where we started – with Jesus and His Truth. If we aim at community – if we aim at learning truth – if we aim even at worshipping Jesus apart from the mission of Jesus...the mission for which we worship Jesus, the mission about which His truth tells us, and the mission on which we base building community – then it won't work and it won't matter.

If we are going to move people to life in Christ one step at a time together, then **the last step we continue to take is to REACH YOUR WORLD.** That we must agree on – we must emphasize – we must point to – we must push and pull and prod and encourage and hold each other accountable in the urgency of living life – of doing all that we have seen – for the sake of the gospel – to make ourselves slaves of those who are far from Jesus – to do whatever it takes day to day to live and earn and take every opportunity to speak Jesus into the lives of others in any way we can.

That step is not something we do at church – it is what we do as the church individually and together every where we are. And you need to BE ABOUT IT.

Wouldn't it be great if when people heard our name – Fairway Baptist Church – they just thought Jesus? That's what we want – to lift high the name of Jesus – to be for His glory – and God has shown us how we are to do that – to move people to life in Christ one step at a time together. And we believe that will happen – **God WILL be glorified, Jesus WILL be lifted up, we will be a great**

church, we will move people to life in Christ WHEN you worship Jesus – WHEN you learn truth – when you build community – when you reach your world.

That's our vision. Now going back to Acts chapter 2. How do you know if you've connected on a personal level with that vision – how do you know if you are sensing a personal connection – because you will not leave here and go live it – you're not going to pursue those steps if you haven't connected with it.

Well there's a one word answer – the answer is passion.

That when you hear me say we are going to be about Jesus - we're going to be about giving you opportunities to and challenging you to worship Jesus, learn truth, build community and reach your world so that we can move people to life in Christ one step at a time together, how do you know if you've connected with that? You know it when you hear this today and there is a sense of passion and fear and awe that wells up inside of you in that moment – that's how you know.

Let me just give you a quick analogy to help you with that. If I were to come up to you today and say that by tomorrow night at 5:00 you need to give me a million dollars. You need to come up with a million bucks by 5 tomorrow, what's your response going to be?

You're going to say no. I'm not going to do that. Got no reason to do that. I've got better things to do than that. No. Why would your reaction be that way?

Because my vision of you giving me a million dollars did not produce in you a sense of awe, of fear, of passion – right?

Well what if I told you tomorrow night at 5:00 your child is going to die. Tomorrow night at 5:00 your husband – your wife – your best friend – whatever – - someone you truly love is going to die – but if you can come up with a million dollars by tomorrow night at 5:00 we have shot that we can give your child and they can live.

Aww man – that's too hard, I don't think I can do that. I've just got too much going on in my life, don't think I can do that. Nah.

No – what are you going to do? You'll move heaven and earth. You'll rob a bank if you have to. And the difference is when the vision was cast it produced in you an awe and a fear and a passion and you went out and you did it. And that's all in the world I'm saying.

That when this vision is cast – this is what we are about – about lifting high the name of Jesus by moving people to life in Christ one step at a time together and we are going to ask you to do things to make that happen – through the power of the Spirit of God in your life – when you hear that if that doesn't just well up in your heart a passion and awe that says “I gotta go do that” – then you've not connected.

Now listen I want to say something that you've got to hear clearly. If you don't connect with that – that's ok. Maybe you just missed it. Maybe some of you are here today but over the past 11 weeks you haven't been here and you haven't connected because you just really missed the vision. That's ok – here's my encouragement to you – go back and listen to the vision – because the people that come to this church – we want to make sure that they are connecting with our vision because if you aren't, you're going to miss what we are about.

There is another group of people that aren't connecting – that aren't feeling that sense of awe - and this is really a good thing – I'm not saying that sarcastically – it is a really godly thing – there are people in this room over the last 11 weeks that you love Jesus – you are passionate about Jesus – about his vision – you love God – your passionate about the great commission – but you've just not connected with *our* vision – I want you to know that's ok – that's ok

You love God – you're committed to him. I've been up here and speaking this vision to you and you're just going that's just not me – that's ok – what that probably means is God may be calling

you to a different vision – God may be calling you to a different vision – and you need to feel the release to pursue that vision.

Listen – I’m not talking to those of you who resonate with this but are still very much in the midst of figuring out how to do it and how to live in it and what it means and working up the courage to take the next step or whatever – but if you are a Christian and you are walking with Jesus and the vision of where we are going as a church is not resonating with you, that’s not a bad thing – that can be a great thing. Just like Paul and Barnabas were both godly men on a missionary journey together and they realized I want to go here I want to go here and they went separate ways – doesn’t mean one was wrong and one was right - it just meant God was calling them in two different directions. And there are people in this room that you need to feel that release from God to go somewhere else. And I don’t mean that in an arrogant way or a bad way – I just mean we support that.

Then there is one other group that is not connecting – and this is where I get in trouble – people get mad at me when I say this – but I’m not trying to be a jerk when I say this – I’m really not – I just want to share with you just from my heart what I think God’s heart is in what He has given us. There is another group in this church that come on Sundays and they would say they are Christians – that they are believers – but they really have no intention of ever living out the vision that God has given us.

They claim to be believers and are just punching the church card and going about their lives but they never have any intention of being a person that really and truly worships Christ on a daily basis – and seeks to learn God’s truth in depth – and to build community – and to reach their world. You may be a Christian but you’re not going to do that and you know you’re not. I just want you to know guys that increasingly in the next several months, this is not going to be your church.

Now if you’re a person that is here and you are here because you are checking this out and you are here to get your questions answered – I want you to know that we love the fact that you are here- we are pumped that you are here to get your questions answered – to check this Christian thing out – and you can stay here to hear it as long as you want to.

Or maybe you are here and you are living missionally and you are serving in some other organization – maybe a para-church organization – or whatever and you are here on Sunday and you pop in and get fed and then go live missionally in the place God has put you – you’re our guest – we love that – that’s amazing – and we’re excited that you are here.

But for that person who says they are a Christian but just never has any intention of coming along side us and joining the vision that God has given us, this is not your church.

And then there is this last group of people – and this is where I get excited because this is most of the people in this room - for most of you when you hear that this is and is going to be a church that wants to lift high the name of Jesus above all things that there is something inside of you that just starts swelling up inside. That when you hear some guy on the stage say we aren’t here for us – we’re here for Jesus – we want to help you move to life in Christ one step at a time and something inside of you says I want to be a part of that. When you hear what it takes: to worship Jesus, learn truth, build community, and reach your world, you say that’s something I can give my life to – and you are connecting, there is a sense of awe – a sense of fear – and you’re like I want to live this out – I don’t have it all figured out – I’m scared – but I want to do this – I want to be a part of that – if that’s you – I’ve got just one thing to say. Let’s do it. Amen – that’s vision, let’s go do it.

Let me wrap up with an illustration that shows what that might look like. You ever heard of a company called Chick-Fil-A? Chick-Fil-A has an item they offer people called a Chick-Fil-A breakfast biscuit – you ever heard of those? Have many of ya’ll ever had one of those? Who has not eaten a Chick-Fil-A breakfast biscuit?

Show a picture – that’s one – that right there - for you godless pagans that didn’t raise your hands – is a 500 calorie piece of buttery fried perfection right there. I want you to listen to the mission statement of Chick-Fil-A – this is on their website –

Our mission as a company is to glorify God – by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us and to have a positive influence on everyone that comes into contact with Chick-Fil-A.

Let me translate to you what that means in English – they want their fried chicken to be so good that when you put it in your mouth you glorify God.

And I want you to think about whether or not they are doing it. They want you to put a piece of chicken in your mouth and go – there’s a God in heaven – I want to tell you they are doing it – think about this. You’ve got Chick-Fil-A which is a blatantly Christian company – blatantly- first words out of their mouth is we’re going to glorify God – they play Christian music in their stores – in cities all over the nation – in cities that are the most liberal – anti-God – anti-religion — cities on planet earth – and yet how many times have you gone to a Chick-Fil-A and there are people wrapped around the building trying to get in there?

Think about that for just a minute – how in the world does an overtly Christian company influence an entire culture of increasingly health conscious - organic food eating – whole food shopping – trans fat avoiding – outside jogging – inside dieting people to go and eat fried chicken for breakfast? I’m telling you – this is being funny today but check this out – it is real simple – here’s how they do it. They make the best fried chicken on planet earth. That’s all there is to it.

And I want you to think about that – what that might look like in your life – to have that kind of vision statement guiding your life. Crazy idea but just apply that same principle to wherever God has you. Apply it to us today. I don’t care where you are or what you do – **don’t just come to church and do life and be mediocre – go do life IN CHRIST one step at a time together – so that people look at you and you offer them so much – you show them so much – you have so much influence in your life that it is just natural that they turn and begin to GLORIFY GOD**, which, by the way, Jesus said would happen.

It isn’t enough for Fairway to give OPPORTUNITIES to worship Jesus and learn truth and build community and reach your world. You must live it – you – I – every one of us who resonates with the name of Jesus and the vision of life in Christ must push and pull and confront and beg and help and serve and give and teach and preach and sing and pray so that we LIVE in this vision together.

And that is where we are headed. That is what God has called us to do. That’s what the His Word has laid out for us. Now it is time to not just be hearers – but doers. **Let’s go do it.** Life in Christ one step at a time together – worshipping Jesus – learning truth – building community – reaching our world.

Let’s pray.