

Where there is no Vision

Tony Dale

Dr's Tony and Felicity Dale share some insights on why leaders need vision!

Every year after the Annual Conference of the Caring Professions Concern, Felicity, the children, and I would stay up in the North Wales area to climb Mt. Snowdon. Snowdon is the tallest mountain in England and Wales. Not much more than a foothill by the standard of the Rockies, it still towered over the region and provided a wonderful challenge to serious walkers. Every year we would walk up to the top via various trails that had been blazed by the coal and copper miners of previous generations. It could be a hard climb at times, but was always worth the effort. Sometimes from the top of the mountain you could see for miles around. At other times the cloud cover would be so thick that you could barely see your hand in front of your face. Felicity and I would use the climb every year as a chance to reflect on what had happened at the conference, and to seek God for vision for the future.

Robert Schuller, in his excellent little book, *The Peak to Peak Principle*, helps us understand the importance of gaining vision at a place where you can see further. The view changes as you rise up higher. In the foothills, all that you may see is the next set of peaks—the next set of challenges ahead of you. But from “the peak” there is nothing to obscure your view of where you can go. We had been working in the East End of London for a number of years. The Lord had blessed the work in many ways. Without us even thinking about it or realizing the implications, we had grown from 6 to 12 to 25 to 50 to 100 to 175 over a period of approximately 4 years. Each year we had doubled.

At this time, the Lord provided the opportunity for Felicity and I to travel out to the Far East and see first-hand some of the incredible work that was being established by Dr. Paul Yooghi Cho in Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, S. Korea. As we sat through their all-night prayer meeting, and then explored their prayer mountain by day, we were amazed and humbled by the scale on which things were happening in Korea. It was like being on the top of a mountain, a true mountaintop experience! What faith and vision that they could “see” and believe for such incredible things.

The Lord began to challenge me. From here I could see so much more than what we were currently experiencing. The Lord spoke to me while I was waiting on Him and he told me, “Up until now you have had the faith to double in size each year in the work that you are sharing in the East End of London.” Now He was challenging me that we needed to double our faith.

“Now, when your vision is enlarged, you need to grow in your faith and your commitment to the heavenly vision.” God was saying into my heart that we could

double in size over the next six months rather than just believing that we could double every year.

As soon as we got back home to our brothers and sisters, I began sharing this message of increasing our faith and expanding our vision. We would never be the same again. By the end of the next six months, those of us involved in various home churches throughout the region had grown to approximately 300. God had not only provided the faith to do his will, but the wherewithal to do it.

A similar thing happened during two visits to India during the past year. Meeting with folks like Dr. Victor Choudhrie's daughter, and hearing what the Lord was accomplishing through her family, was a challenging and humbling experience. From a position of prominence as a nationally respected surgeon, the Lord had challenged Victor to leave all of that behind and begin planting simple churches in homes so as to reach his state of Madhra Pradesh. In 7 years they have grown to over 7000 house churches scattered across the state. Teenagers and housewives, laborers and engineers were all finding that God would use them to plant churches if their lives were available. We came home with our vision renewed, and our hearts committed to seek the Lord for much greater church planting activity here in Austin.

As Felicity took time to wait on God, she felt that the Lord was giving her a goal of being involved in 10 new church plants this year (2001). As we write this, it is mid-September, and we have seen 7 new home churches established so far. It's not 7000, but it is a start! Our faith will be stronger next year. And there will be more people involved in the task.

America faces a time of incredible challenge and opportunity. The recent tragedies of the terrorist attacks produce in us all some of the same uncertainties that many others around the world have had to face for years. But it is into the very arena of uncertainty and fear that the message of the gospel comes across so clearly. But for many people, even the concept that church will have an answer to the challenges that we currently face as a country is laughable. People have given up on church, but they have not given up on Jesus.

For them to meet Jesus, the Word still needs "to become a human being and live here with us" (John 1:14 CEV). People have the opportunity to meet Jesus whenever they meet us. The question is not, "Will they come to church?" Rather we need to ask ourselves, "How do we take Jesus to them?" The answers are obvious. In our daily living, in our interactions at work and at home, we live the community, the ecclesia ("called out ones), what the New Testament calls "church." Now as these relationships develop, and we live the reality of Jesus among us, the "where two or three are gathered together in my name" (Matt 18:18), then we are seeing church emerge. No wonder the early Christians are described as meeting from house to house. This is where so much natural interaction occurs. How did we ever get into the position where we thought that

sharing our lives together as the family of God needs to take place in special buildings and at special times?

When Felicity and I visited Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul something new was birthed in our spirits. It was similar to what I described above as we saw the incredible speed with which new home churches are being planted in India. Dr. Yooghi Cho would describe this as living in the 4th dimension—the dimension of the Holy Spirit. Living in this realm, you begin to see as possible things that you would have formerly thought of as impossible. From the peak of the mountain you can begin to see ranges in the distance that you didn't even know were there.

Many of you reading this article will have read earlier articles from previous issues talking about the church planting movements that are emerging in many parts of the world. (If you have not seen these, either check out old issues of H2H online at www.house2.tv or go to the Southern Baptist International Mission Board site at www.imb.org to find materials on Church Planting Movements by David Garrison.) For most of us church growth used to be thought of in terms of one church planting another— one home church dividing into two maybe every year or two. Now the perspective is changing. We are all beginning to see that every church should have built into its DNA a commitment to planting churches that in turn plant churches. We are looking for movements to start where multiple churches are growing, and in turn planting multiple churches. No longer is the thought to grow and divide on a slow basis, but rather to pro-actively plan to plant many churches into new homes and communities. Suddenly from a new “peak” we have been able to see further than before!

It's time for us to scale some new heights and see some bigger visions. After all, God promised that

When the last days come,

I will give my Spirit to everyone.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,

And your old men will have dreams.

In those days I will give my Spirit to my servants, Both men and women, and they will prophesy.

(Acts 2:17-18 CEV)

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