



# vision study

## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

the river church community  
week 4

### **Introduction & Opening Prayer**

We've come to the end of this four week series on vision., but most of us are just at the beginning or in the middle of engaging God and our hearts re: our personal vision. This small group will help us identify and reflect on how we need to respond to God in order to carry on vs. let it fall off the screen of our busy lives. At the end of the evening, we should each have a clear idea of what steps we should take to discern Jesus' vision for our lives, what help we need to take those steps, and some loving support/accountability to act on what we are clear about.

Let's pray together that we might be able to know how God is leading us and that we would have the courage to follow.

### **Scripture Meditation** (15 min.)

The most famous verse in Scripture on the topic of vision is Proverbs 29:18. In order to grasp its range of meanings, let's read it in multiple versions –

Where there is no vision, the people perish:  
but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

– King James Version

If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves;  
But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.

– The Message

Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,  
but blessed is he who keeps the law.

– English Standard Version

Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint;  
but blessed are those who heed wisdom's instruction.

– Today's New International Version

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What does it seem to say about a vision that matters? What do "vision", "seeing what God is doing", "prophetic vision", and "revelation" all have in common? What do they point to in terms of personal vision?
2. What happens to us when we don't have this kind of vision? Can you think of examples in your own life of when you didn't have vision/revelation from God and you stumbled/cast off restraint? What was that time like?
3. How does the second line in the couplet interpret, qualify, and add to the first line? What hope does line two give to folks who don't have a crystal clear revelation of their calling/vision? How are vision and obeying the Word tied together in Pr. 28:19? in your experience?



# vision study

## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

the river church community  
week 4

### **Personal Meditation on Our Lives** (10-15 min.)

We as a church have been engaging in the vision process in a variety of ways the past few months. Clarity re: personal or corporate vision is more like being a helper to a master artist who is weaving a tapestry or a making a mosaic – we slowly see it becoming clear as we help and pay attention to what God, the artist is doing, than a movie script that shows up in our mailbox or a house built according to our own design. Let's take some time to reflect on any traction or clarity you have received as a result of participating in any of the following means:

- a. All Church Retreat: the funeral exercise, any reflection time or conversations there.
- b. Time-Line Seminar: especially core values and sense of destiny guidance. (this one is available online at our website if you missed it.)
- c. Family Vision Seminar (contact [jill@the-river.org](mailto:jill@the-river.org) for info if you missed)
- d. Vision Small Groups: Week 1 – a heart like Nehemiah's, Week 2 – widening our prayer lives, believing God for larger things than survival and immediate problems, Week 3 – facing our barriers and blockages in view of the risk and sacrifice that all vision will call for.
- e. Reading *Visioneering* and doing the visioneering projects at the end of each chapter.
- f. Sunday Messages: Series on Jesus' Vision from Luke 4, our current series based on Nehemiah.

Take some time to journal/reflect on how God might be engaging you in any of the above means. Do any of them feel more "hot" or attractive to you? Secondly, prayerfully test what you need to respond to his invitation:

1. Do you have a growing sense of **what steps** you need to take to clarify personal and marriage/family co-mission either in study or action? **What help** might you need?
  - regular times with your spouse with childcare.
  - A personal retreat.
  - Finishing *Visioneering*/doing the exercises.
  - Exposure to the needs of God's people & God's Word → prayer and fasting like Nehemiah.
  - Meeting with a pastor to go deeper in the time-line work.
  - Working/praying with a vision partner.
  - Other?
2. Are you blocked, disengaged, or in the dark in some way? (see list of blockages below from last week's group.)
  - Asking for dedicated time(s) of prayer for healing and release with friends/prayer ministers. Perhaps you are haunted by a negative vision that someone else cast for you? (*Visioneering* ch. 9)
  - Asking for help from your community to get out of survival mode. (\$, isolation w/small kids)
  - Prayer and fasting from food/substances or media to tune into your own heart in God.
  - Grief work for a past hurts/failure/broken dreams → 2 Cor. 1:4 vision, "(God) comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."



# vision study

## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

- Help with boundaries so you have room for vision because of caretaking others in a co-dependent way.
3. What grace do you want to ask the Lord for in this time of your life? Write in your journal, "Father, I need the grace to . . ." If you are in a desert/dark night time, you may need to seek grace for daily obedience and patience.

### **Sharing & Prayer** (20-40 min.)

Come together in sharing/prayer groups and share concretely what your reflection has pointed towards. Groups should be small enough that everyone will be able to share during this meeting and seek accountable follow-up from the hearers.

You should have at least one significant step that you are taking as a result of these vision studies. If not, group members should follow up with each other until there is something concrete for each member.

Partners may want to commit to a common step for accountability, e.g. finishing *Visioneering* together, taking a vision excursion like an ICE trip, informational interviewing with visionary risk-takers, etc.

### **Potential Blockage List**

1. Overwhelmed by issues of "survival" – finances, small kids, etcetera – unclear on how God's vision might engage me in this difficult time.
2. Overwork – stuck between world's railroad track or ambition and space for a God vision.
3. Numbed by routine or numbed by overstimulation of entertainment/other pursuits that seem more real/exciting.
4. A life w/poor boundaries, always meeting other's needs, following their agenda vs. making space to follow God's call in your life.
5. Blowing out the pilot light of vision every time God lights it because of fear of being out of control.
6. Burned by a past vision commitment (hurtful leader, failure of members or yourself, seeming failure of God's promises, etc.) leaving you wary of re-engaging in vision, allowing God that much access to your heart.
7. Called but afraid of what it might cost → avoiding, stalling, running away.
8. Not a visionary person, struggling to hear God, waiting for a leader or friends to bring a vision you might like to join up with.
9. Don't trust Jesus' words fully. You are still investigating following him.
10. Pregnant with a vision, but waiting for partners, timing, circumstances to open a way forward.



# vision study

## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

the river church community  
week 4

### Leader's Guide

#### The Goals of this Study –

1. Each member would reflect on the various means of exploring Gospel vision that we have engaged with so far and identify which one(s) God is specifically using in their life to reveal his vision for their life.
2. Group conviction that a life w/o a vision is sub-Christian. (meditation on Pr. 28:19)
3. Each member would be able to identify what steps they are going to take, and/or identify what help they need to continue their personal vision journey and make a commitment to pursue that help, then to seek to be held accountable for taking that step and pursuing that help.
4. Each member would continue to deal honestly with barriers to vision, confess to one another their need for God's touch of healing, forgiveness, courage, etc. and identify how God might be offering them a path of deliverance.
5. The group would feel closer to one another, more real, and more united in pursuing Jesus and his vision for their lives as a result of these 4 small group sessions.

#### Personal Preparation

The most important step of preparation for this study is that you and your co-leader and any core members you can recruit, especially those who facilitate prayer groups or spiritual friendship groups, do the journaling reflection and have some clarity about how you are going to continue to pursue personal mission – the steps you will take by faith and the help you need and will seek.

You will also need to decide on how much time to give to each section:

1. Scripture meditation
2. Personal reflection
3. Group sharing

#### **Scripture Meditation** (15 min.)

You want to fully engage with this text w/o getting lost in arguing over it's meaning, spending too much time on it and not getting to the meat of this small group, the personal reflection below. The point is clear and it should be a text we all have memorized to inspire and guide our life in God.

The most famous verse in Scripture on the topic of vision is Proverbs 29:18. In order to grasp its range of meanings, let's read it in multiple versions –

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# vision study

## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

the river church community  
week 4

but blessed are those who heed wisdom's instruction.

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It's important to look at Proverbs 28:19 in its full range of meaning vs. go with a single translation that leaves out a significant part of its meaning and implications. "Prophetic vision" from ESV means more of a "God breathed vision", a vision from God than a vision coming through an ecstatic trance. Satan poses as an "angel of light" and he can mimic ecstatic trances, though plenty of God's people have received life visions in this way. The issue is, does the vision line up with God's intent in Scripture? Does it line up with the promises of the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus and the apostles preached? Nehemiah is a good example of someone with a "prophetic vision" – it was very risky but it was thoroughly grounded in God's promises re: exile and return from Deuteronomy 30.

### Discussion questions:

1. What does it seem to say about a vision that matters? What do "vision", "seeing what God is doing", "prophetic vision", and "revelation" all have in common? What do they point to in terms of personal vision?

Note: The Proverb was written for communal vision primarily with personal vision as part of God's wider vision for his people. So, it's not wrong to apply it to personal vision, but it needs to be seen in the context of God's vision for the church, for a community of people journeying together.

2. What happens to us when we don't have this kind of vision? Can you think of examples in your own life of when you didn't have vision/revelation from God and you stumbled/cast off restraint? What was that time like?

This does not have to be a time of radical sin and depravity. Just drifting along in life, getting lost in doing many good things vs. being fully alive in God. Being "scattered/lost" is another translation for "perishing"

3. How does the second line in the couplet interpret, qualify, and add to the first line? What hope does line two give to folks who don't have a crystal clear revelation of their calling/vision? How are vision and obeying the Word tied together in Pr. 28:19? in your experience?

The second line grounds and qualifies true vision as lining up with all of God's revealed Word in Scripture.

Some may stumble over the KJV and ESV's translation, "the law" and get stuck, "law" has never been a popular term among Protestant Americans. But, God's law, "Torah" (literally "teaching") is the path of life for us as we live it out by faith, even if our own personal life vision is not fully clear yet and he cannot get to personal vision w/o living out Jesus' commands in the Body. All believers live 80-90% Jesus' common vision of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount and the rest of his teachings/healings. The 10-20% unique to us is vitally important, but if it's not clear or God has not revealed it yet, we have a path of blessing in the Spirit in "keeping my commandments" (John 14:15-24)

### **Personal Meditation on Our Lives** (10-15 min.)

You can read this paragraph and list aloud, silently, or summarize for people as they read. Many will have only engaged with the small groups and the sermons. As others share re: how the other elements have impacted them, there may be a sense of being one down or left out, so be aware pastorally, and there may be a hunger to "catch up". The second vision seminar in January (check church calendar for exact dates) can be attended w/o completing seminar #1 work.



# vision study

## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

the river church community  
week 4

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Take some time to journal/reflect on how God might be engaging you in any of the above means. Do any of them feel more "hot" or attractive to you? Secondly, prayerfully test what you need to respond to his invitation:

You want to have paper and pens for those who don't have a journal or forgot theirs.

You may want to share an example of #1-3 from your life or a hypothetical. You should be watching to see if anyone needs help/gets stuck and make yourself available should anyone need help.

1. Do you have a growing sense of **what steps** you need to take to clarify personal and marriage/family co-mission either in study or action? **What help** might you need?
  - regular times with your spouse with childcare.
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## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

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### **Sharing & Prayer** (20-40 min.)

If your group is small enough, say under 7 attendees, you can share in one circle. But, if you know that people feel self-conscious as one group, or anyone is a long sharer, then be sure to break into groups of 3-4 of same sex or two couples together.

If you don't have "permanently" assigned prayer groups yet, try to break people up so that there is a trusty facilitator, hopefully someone who can lead out in the sharing in each group. These questions can be the spiritual friendship group topics for the meeting after this group time if your group runs out of time before each person can share.

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# vision study

## Next Steps & Help on the Journey

the river church community  
week 4

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