

FBC POWELL, 4-8-18 AM NOTES
"Accomplishing the Vision: What Will It Take?"
Various Scriptures

Our Mission: "First Baptist Powell exists to invest in and equip the next generation to live Christ transformed lives in a rapidly changing culture."

Proverbs 6:16, 19b (NKJV) "These six *things* the Lord hates, yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him... one who sows discord among brethren."

"Methods are many, principles are few; methods often change, but principles never do!"

I. Faith

Hebrews 11:6a (NASB) "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*..."

Matthew 9:29b (NASB) "It shall be done to you according to your faith."

John 16:9 (NASB) "concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me."

"Faith is the refusal to panic."

— Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones

"First Baptist Academy exists to assist parents by providing an excellent classical education that fosters a Biblical worldview, striving to equip students to impact the world for Christ."

Hebrews 11:6a (NASB) "And without faith it is impossible to please Him."

II. Unity

John 13:35 (NASB) "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

III. Prayer

Sermon Title: Accomplishing the Vision: What Will It Take?

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Now that you have seen an overview of the vision, I want to focus on what it will take to accomplish the vision. I also want to re-emphasize that this is *not* a finished product that we are ready to vote on immediately. Also, what has been presented is not the whole vision for the church. For instance, there is not a lot about revitalizations, mission partnerships, unreached people groups, and church planting in places like Salt Lake City. I want to assure you that there was discussion and affirmation among the elders concerning the fact that missions are in the DNA of First Baptist Church! We have no plans to jettison missions. I am, however, reminded of a slogan we had several years ago in one of our many capital campaigns: “Expand the Base to Reach the World”. Unless First Baptist Church remains healthy and is continually as our mission statement says, “...Investing in and equipping the next generation to live Christ transformed lives in a rapidly changing culture”, there will be a shrinking pool of people to do missions and a shrinking amount of money to support those who are willing to go. We are not too far from that condition now. The vision Rick presented to you is an “expand the base” vision. Our desire and prayers are that this expanding of the base will result ultimately in huge numbers of people doing missions short term around the world and many more investing their lives full time in reaching the unreached or under-reached people groups and cities.

Hopefully, you already have discerned that this is not a “puff piece” of canned public relations gimmicks. We are being open and real with you. We are going through some strange times, times like I have never seen in all my years of being a pastor. Our mission statement uses that phrase “...in a rapidly changing culture”. I’m not sure that any previous generation in the history of America has seen the culture changing as rapidly as we have over the last several years. There are many churches I am aware of that are going through circumstances similar to ours. That doesn’t make me feel any better. We are going to be speaking plainly in the days ahead as we give more details about the vision and ask you to generously support financially what we believe God is leading us to do. We want to continue to be very open and share needs and get input. We are going to start monthly Q & A times to give you a platform to ask questions and express concerns. We are not shrinking from telling you the truth and from hearing your concerns. What we must not do is spread rumors, speculate among ourselves, and criticize behind other’s backs. That behavior is called in Scripture “sowing discord among the brethren.” Here is what God says about that in Proverbs 6:16, 19b (NKJV): “These six *things* the Lord hates, yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him... one who sows discord among brethren.” That word “abomination” means “a feeling of intense disapproval toward somebody or something.”

When God calls us to a vision, it always involves leaving our comfort zone. We all like to be comfortable, but our God specializes in “comfort zone removal.” We tend to gravitate toward what we think we can handle in our own strength. Christians and rubber bands have this in common – they both need to be stretched to fulfill their intended purpose.

In my experience, God never gives a vision that we can accomplish in our own strength and without great sacrifice. Following God’s guidance always calls us out of our comfort zone. Most of us do not like change. Many church members I know can relate to the Duke of Cambridge who reportedly said, “Any change at any time for any reason is to be deplored.” I think I have pastored some of his descendants! Reaching people in a rapidly changing culture necessitates us making changes in the way many things are done. We are to never change the message we proclaim, but the way we get the message to those in the culture often changes. I remember a rhyme I memorized decades ago. It says, “Methods are many, principles are few; methods often change, but principles never do!” That is always true of biblical principles!

What will it take to accomplish the vision? It will take three things.

I. Faith

Hebrews 11:6a: “And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*...” The key that opens the door to what God has for His people is faith. Jesus said in Matthew 9:29b: “It shall be done to you according to your faith.” The opposite of biblical faith is unbelief. The Greek word often used for unbelief is simply the word for faith with a negative in front of it. Unbelief is literally “unfaith.” Unbelief in Scripture is not presented as a weakness; it is wickedness. John 16:9: “concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me.” I don’t have time to develop it, but you can make a good case for the fact that unbelief is the root of every sin.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones said, “Faith is the refusal to panic.” [Source Unknown] How is it that we can refuse to panic in scary times of turmoil and cultural upheaval? It is because we have the promises of God and the power of God to fulfill every promise He makes. Unbelief puts our circumstances between us and God, but faith puts God between us and our circumstances. That allows us to refuse to panic.

Faith is not just gritting our teeth and thinking positively about what we want to happen. Faith begins with knowing that what we are asking of God is His will. Let’s look at our mission statement and ask this question: Is it the will of God that we invest in and equip the next generation to live Christ transformed lives in a rapidly changing culture? That doesn’t mean that we don’t care about the older generation. It means that our mandate, our focus is on the next generation, discipling them, investing in them, and equipping them. Our church leaders sensed over a decade ago that the Lord wanted us to prioritize church revitalization – coming alongside a struggling church and investing primarily people but also financial resources to see them become healthy and self-supporting again. He has so blessed us in doing this with amazing results in two churches. Learn this, in every church that is dying and in desperate need of restoration one thing they have in common is that they have not reached the next generation. Whether or not you agree with all the details that Rick presented, the fact is that they are primarily aimed at investing in and equipping the next generation. The mission statement of FBA is “First Baptist Academy exists to assist parents by providing an excellent classical education that fosters a biblical worldview, striving to equip students to impact the world for Christ.” All our mission efforts fall under the church mission statement. The renovation of the facilities is definitely tied in to that mission statement. The building proposed is a response to our rapidly changing culture and we believe that it will be an effective tool for church and school to invest in and equip the next generation to live Christ transformed lives in a rapidly changing culture. The five-year goal is 100% about reaching the unchurched and discipling them and equipping them to live Christ transformed lives in a rapidly changing culture. We are not forsaking the older generation, but speaking as a member of that older generation, I am thankful that I am a part of a church that targets the next generation!

Faith is not one of the ways we please God; faith is the indispensable ingredient in pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6: “And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*...”). We refuse to panic and choose to trust God to provide what is needed to do what we believe He has told us to do!

II. Unity

I am convinced that most believers do not realize how precious unity is to our Lord. The flip side of that is that most believers do not realize how much disunity grieves our Lord. One of the things about the early church in Acts that amazed those who watched them was the unity and the love they had for one another. One of the means that God uses to draw lost people to Himself is the example of how Christians love one another. John 13:35: “By this all men will know that

you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The devil would rather stir up dissension among believers than almost any other evil thing imaginable. Satan and his demons laugh and are filled with glee when Christians separate, refuse to speak to one another, or divide into opposing groups. We must resolve that even when we disagree with one another we will not give in to being mean spirited and divisive.

One of the areas that has potential for disagreement is in how parents choose to educate their children. I have taught for as long as I can remember that parents are responsible for their children’s education. Long before FBA was even thought of I taught that parents have the duty to be aware of what their children are being taught. That is true if they go to public school, Christian school, or if they are home schooled. Kathy and I used all three of those means of education for our five children. Whether they were in public, Christian, or home school we believed that we were responsible for what they were being taught. We (mostly Kathy) examined their textbooks, talked with them about what they were being taught. We went to endless open house nights (sixteen straight years at Powell High School) and regularly taught them through family devotions. We certainly were far from perfect, but we took their education seriously.

In the late 1990’s the culture began to rapidly speed up the pace of abandoning its Christian influence. Nowhere was that more evident than in the schools. God began to burden me and several others about starting a Christian school. We knew that it would be a lengthy process and we wanted to do it right. We moved very slowly and deliberately and now we are blessed with a stable school of slightly over 400 students in pre-K – 12th grade and a little over 200 children in our home school umbrella. We have maintained a policy of not criticizing or belittling parents who chose the public-school option. We are compelled however to point out that with the rapidly changing culture, many of the changes are aimed at the schools. We are now seeing mega shifts in our culture away from its moral base that was influenced by Christianity. One example of many we could give of this shifting culture is in the area of sexual preference and gender identity. It is in response to shifts like these that FBA was started and has been successful. I want to say “thank you” to those who have and are sacrificing and giving to make FBA this very effective ministry of FBC. Make no mistake, we believe that FBA is a ministry that was begun with God’s guidance and we are thankful for how He is using it. But I want to be very clear that we love, we refuse to look down on, and we stand for the right of every parent to determine the educational choice for their children. There must be unity among families that choose different ways of educating their children. I remind parents that however you choose to educate your children, you as the parent have the ultimate responsibility for your children’s education. We want to cultivate an atmosphere of unity among those who make different choices.

We must not allow where parents choose to educate their children become an issue that destroys the sweet unity that our church has experienced for 129 years. When there are problems that arise, please, I plead with you, do not go to those who have nothing to do the solution and unload on them. Come to one of the elders and we will listen to you with respect and treat your concern with seriousness.

One of the areas the elders are committed to prioritize is to increase our efforts to reach families whose children are in the public schools. Rick dealt with these efforts in general, but we will be sharing many specifics in days to come. We believe that one of the ways this unity can be enhanced is building the Student Life Center. This facility is designed to be used by all youth.

Unity requires a tremendous amount of effort and compassion and even sacrifice. But something that is so precious to God must be prioritized by us. Our Youth Ministry is working hard on maintaining a presence in the public schools. We have what we call a “Culture Team” (made of

public school and FBA parents that I meet with) that is constantly exploring ways to create a culture in our church that eradicates disunity based on parent's education choices.

III. Prayer

This vision will never come to pass apart from fervent, widespread, intentional prayer. If we are serious about prayer, it will also be accompanied with fasting. I'm not talking about prayer last because it sounds good and spiritual. I put prayer at the conclusion to remind us that it is the primary determiner of whether this vision will be successively carried out or whether it is just noise.

I stated in a message a few weeks ago that our church is at a crossroads. Are we going the way of just watching as things decline and the church becomes an irrelevant shrinking museum attended by a few people who simply complain about the culture and its jettison of most every biblical principle and then fondly focus on the glory days in the past? Or are we going to step out in faith, determined to be a part of the solution and refusing to criticize or sow discord, but resolve to take our concerns to the church leaders? Are we going to value unity as God values unity and refuse to become bogged down with a critical spirit? Are you willing to pray? I mean really pray. I mean even to pray with fasting? You will hear more about times of prayer that the whole church is focused on. Tonight, we will have a corporate prayer time where this will be one of the items of our focus. You are encouraged to participate. Faith, unity, and prayer, without these, we will go the wrong way at the crossroad.

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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