

Part One:

A Case for Contemporary Apostolic Leadership

Abstract

On the basis of an introductory discussion of the biblical concept of *prophetic vision*, the thesis for Part One proposes to argue that without denigrating the seminally important role of the original twelve apostles (and Paul), there is still a vital function for post-ascension apostolic ministry to play in the church at large today.

After redressing the issue of apostolic *cessationism*, this document will turn to probe the issue of apostolic succession and the primacy of Peter. However, the solution to the arguments posed here will be an atypical recommendation of both a Protestant and Catholic ordination protocol.

Such protocol, in addition to acknowledging the *Peterine pattern* of apostolic succession for the Roman Catholic church, will recommend the *Pauline pattern* of apostolic endorsement for Protestants. Along the way, a biblical description of apostolic

ministry, character, and work will be pursued under the rubric of a sender, a sent one, and an assignment.

After this, the remarkable agreement between famed missiologist Ralph Winter (1924–2009) and renowned Chinese church planter Watchman Nee (1903–1972) will be compared by use of Winter’s terms *modality* and *sodality*, or the local and/or translocal nature of the church, respectively. This will then lead to the confirmation of Alan Johnson’s concept of Paul’s apostolic team as the missional identification of modern Protestant missions—central of which is the dynamic role of apostolic leadership.

Introduction A

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Last Days

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1–4 ESV)

[Peter then said] this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and ... even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy ... before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon

the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:16–21 ESV)

According to the renowned statistician of Christianity, David Barrett,¹ there were an estimated seventy-four million Pentecostals/Charismatics (Spirit-baptized believers), or 6 percent of the world's Christian population, in 1970. In 1997, just twenty-seven years later, he estimated that this figure had reached 497 million, or 27 percent of the Christian population. This is more than the total number of mainstream Protestants (Lutherans, Reformed, Baptists, Methodists, Adventists, etc.) and Anglicans/Episcopalians combined. In fact, Barrett projected that according to current trends, this figure is likely to rise to, or 44 percent of the total number of Christians, by 2025.²

When comparing the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost with the global outpouring of the Spirit in modern times, it becomes readily apparent that Joel's prophecy³ is still relevant to believers in the twenty-first century.

For instance, the manifestation of *glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues (see Acts 1:5; 1:8; 2:4; 2:38; 4:31; 9:17; 10:44–48; 11:15; 19:6; Mark 16:17; Acts 10:44–46; Acts 19:7–8), is still observable among the mass of Spirit-baptized believers worldwide. Additionally, there is a marked interest in end-time prophecy, or a preoccupation with the last days—especially as it relates to the appearance of the Antichrist⁴ and the global work of missions. In fact, such an increased focus on missionization is central to the Lord's declaration that “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then *the end* will come” (Matt. 24:14 NIV, emphasis added).

Indeed, the prophetic time clock is winding down—from Joel and Peter's use of the last *days* to John's use of the last *hour* of world history, ultimately leading to the Lord's promised return: “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the

antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18 NIV).

It might be helpful here to mention that depending on your theological background, speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) may or may not be the necessary sign for everyone as evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. After all, even Jesus was both baptized in water and confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit by the sign of a dove—rather than by the manifestation of speaking in tongues. And even though Jesus, as the Son of God, is a unique exception, most of those who have been seasoned by four to five decades of charismatic ministry—including the author himself—can attest to the fact that not everyone speaks in tongues—regardless of the eagerness of the faith of the minister or the recipient of the ministry. It simply is not a universal phenomenon that *must be required* of all new believers. Rather, an openness to the reception of the Holy Spirit’s baptism—hopefully near the time of one’s baptism in water, should suffice in empowering one’s Christian experience—while leaving one open to further power encounters with the Holy Spirit.

That being said, here are some of most important biblical verses from 1 Corinthians 12–14 that deal with the original apostolic instruction of Paul regarding spiritual gifts—including tongues.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:27-30).

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1).

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away (1 Cor. 12:8).

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up (1 Cor. 14:26).

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Cor. 14:39-40).

As a final part of this introduction, it should be herewith confirmed that the content of this book speaks to the continuing theme of *restoration*, which the Lord Jesus is accomplishing by recovering a true sense of the *original church pattern*—as covered more below (Acts 3:21). Such a pattern should be comprehensively informed by human history and the biblical literature of the Old and New Testaments, as well as contemporary cultural developments—while acknowledging the eternal nature of the church. “Just as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4 NASB).

Introduction B

Creedalism and Canadian Sabbatical

(Note: The Nicene Creed, below, is accepted by most Christians as a brief overview of the tenets of the Christian faith. The Creed was adopted in the city of Nicaea [present day Iznik, Turkey] by the First Ecumenical Council, which convened there in AD 325)

The Nicene Creed⁵

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from

heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy Catholic/Christian and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Creedalism—Good and Bad

“We’ve got epistles, so who needs apostles?”⁶ Although a valid question of the honest inquirer, this same question has almost taken on creedal implications, even defying scriptural cross-examination. After all, creeds are supposed to be authoritative statements of faith, declarations of truth, and guidelines for living. Creeds originally came about because of an effort to preserve the basic tenets of the Christian faith from the frailty of human memory, the danger of pagan mixture, and the distortions of heretical teachers.

As a result, creeds can be good or bad. Good creeds provide signposts to those who are walking in the way of the Lord. These creeds can provide a tether rope protecting one from straying too

far from the truth (see 2 John 9). Good creeds point us toward growth and progress. They enhance our freedom to explore and to become all God intends for us to be. They keep us responsible to obey and are invitations to fellowship.

Bad creeds are not signposts, but tombstones. Truth has ended with them. They inhibit progress, threaten against “trespassers,” and become monolithic edicts demanding unquestioned compliance. Bad creeds, or bad interpretations of good creeds, steal from us the adventure of exploration and subtly relieve us from responsible Christian living. Declining enrollments in the more historic and/or creedal branches of Christendom attest to the fact of a great need to return to the original spirit and intent of the early creedal pioneers.

One ill-advised attempt to respond to the bad side of creedalism is to reject it entirely. However, such a reaction to *impersonal* creedalism has so *personalized* our faith and experience that we have nearly lost sight of our historic heritage, identity, and mission altogether. There is nothing wrong with good creeds or orthodoxy. They are only wrong when they idolatrously become an end in themselves instead of a means to an end— “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”⁷

The aforementioned global outpouring of the Holy Spirit has also witnessed a renewed hunger for the authentic supernatural power of God, a re-examination of the post-ascension reality of apostolic (and prophetic) ministry, and a new inquiry into our former view of eschatology, or the *last days*.⁸

“But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for *restoring all the things* about which God

spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago” (Acts 3:18–21 ESV, emphasis added). It is the author’s conviction that this *period of restoration* includes the returning of strategic apostolic and prophetic leadership ministries to their proper functioning position in the body of Christ today.

That position, according to Ephesians 2, is foundational in nature: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19–20 ESV).

Though the foundational significance of the original twelve apostles (and Paul) should never be undermined, the fact that Jesus himself gave the gift of apostleship *after* his ascension is also quite significant—though in a different order of magnitude (see Eph. 4:7–11). Indeed, the foundational ministry of post-ascension apostles and prophets must be carried on “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12–13 ESV).

Even the most casual observer can readily verify that the church has not arrived at the fullness of the maturity and stature of Christ. Hence, we are still in desperate need of all of the equipping ministries, especially the strategic master-planning capability of apostles and the visionary proclamation of prophets.

After all, a well-laid foundation is the basis upon which something stands and is thereby supported, or upheld. In construction terminology, it is the masonry substructure of a building. In other words, without a firm foundation, a natural building could easily collapse with even a relatively minor provocation of wind, rain, flooding, or tremor.

These same principles hold true in the spiritual realm of existence. After all, the church is not a natural structure, but a spiritual house (and body). Without a proper foundation of apostolic and prophetic builders (with Jesus himself being the cornerstone), the assembly of God's people, regardless of how large or small, is in jeopardy of collapsing when tested.

Canadian Sabbatical

While on a sabbatical in Canada one summer, I had an opportunity to witness the restoration of a cottage next door to ours. Each day, I would visit the carpenter, who was busily working, until one day I noticed he had stopped working. When he returned several days later, I asked him what had happened.

He responded by saying that he could not continue the project until the building inspector had approved his work thus far. "After the building inspector makes certain that I have rebuilt the house according to code, then I will be able to continue and finish restoring the cottage."

"However," he added, "there is one more inspection that I will have to pass as well." Pointing his finger to the nearest telephone pole, he asked, "Do you see that transformer up there?"

After affirming that I had, he continued, "Before I can tap into that source of power, the electrical inspector has got to approve that my wiring is also up to code. If it is not, the whole place could go up in smoke once the switch is thrown!"

When applied to the church, without adequate apostolic and prophetic ministry, the church (both locally and translocally) could suffer either the consequence of faulty construction (relational conflict and collapse), or destruction by fire (gossip/verbal defilement and slander). Consider the apostle James's warning:

“The tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself” (James 3:6 NLT).

May the Lord Jesus continue to raise up and send forth apostles and prophets:

“Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles to help in the global restoration of a house in which God will again be pleased to manifest his presence, demonstrate his power, and carry out his purpose some of whom they will kill and persecute’” (ESV)

Indeed, the mission of the church can be stated as to declare the kingdom with power, to build the church with grace, and to reach the nations with compassion. Maranatha!

The Power of Prophetic Vision

Your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions (Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17); for the dream of the old becomes the vision of the young.

Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. (Hab. 2:2–3 NIV).

All men dream: but not equally, Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible.⁹

A Pioneering Spirit Gone Bad

"About 350 years ago, a shipload of (German) travelers landed on the northeast coast of America. The first year they established a town site. The next year they elected a town government. The third year the town government planned to build a road five miles westward into the wilderness. In the fourth year the people tried to impeach their town government because they thought it was a waste of public funds to build a road five miles westward into a wilderness. Who needed to go there anyway? Here were people who had the vision to see three thousand miles across an ocean and overcome great hardships to get there. But in just a few years they were not able to see even five miles out of town." The problem was that they had lost their *vision*. If we as Christ's disciples fail to have a vision, dreams, and plans, we will end up like the people in this illustration—having lost our historic pioneering spirit.¹⁰

A. Vision Definition/Description

Vision can be defined as a compelling mental portrait of a preferable future, communicated by God to his people (individually and collectively through chosen leaders), based upon an accurate understanding of God, one's self, and circumstances—all for the purpose of advancing God's kingdom.¹¹

*"Vision is an effective leader's chief preoccupation. Above mentoring, communicating, and paying attention to people, a leader must obsess [continually focus] about the future. Vision is essential to every effective leader".*¹²

Though one might argue that the leader's relationship with Jesus should be the chief preoccupation of an effective spiritual leader, Finzel's remark does emphasize how important the pursuit

and possession of vision is to every effective leader. And since Finzel has written a compelling book on leadership, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, we would all be well-advised to take his words to heart.

B. Six Characteristics of Biblical/Prophetic Vision¹³

Since one of the main goals of this text is to nurture the general visionary capacity of all its readers, especially as it relates to apostolic ministry, we thought it would be helpful to cover six key characteristics of biblical (or prophetic) vision.

1. Vision and Prophetic Revelation

Proverbs 29 states that “where there is no vision (lit. prophetic revelation)¹⁴ the people perish—or cast off restraint.” In other words, visionless people tend to disassociate from their collective identity and mission, becoming self-serving and self-centered, resulting in anarchy, confusion, and division. However, the end of the same verse holds a promise for the obedient: “but blessed is he who continually keeps the Law/Word of the Lord” (Prov. 29:18 NIV). However, what must immediately be acknowledged is the significant difference between Old Testament prophets and the New Testament gift of prophecy (see 1 Cor. 14), lest we conflate the two. In the New Testament, the gift of prophecy was a maturing spiritual endowment used to build up, strengthen, encourage, and console (see 1 Cor. 14:3). Such a gift was available to all believers and could be confirmed (or judged) by others present at the time the message was delivered. This is not to imply that there were no New Testament prophets, which a review of the book of Acts readily verifies.

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus,

stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. This happened during the reign of Claudius. (Acts 11:27–28)

Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. (Acts 15:32)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11–13 NIV)

On the other hand, Old Testament prophets were specially chosen and empowered/anointed individuals (Moses, Isaiah, Elijah, Jonah, etc.) whose utterance on behalf of the Lord God could not err upon the threat of death.

“But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death. You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed” (Deut. 18:20–22 NIV).

Returning to the theme of the characteristics of vision in Proverbs 29, notice how vision unites people for a common purpose, as opposed to everyone separating from one another to

seek their own desires.

“He who separates himself seeks his own desire and quarrels against all sound reason” (Prov. 18:1 NIV). “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25).

Hence, in Psalm 133, the unity of God’s people is pictured as the anointing oil on the high priest which pleases the Lord, sanctifies (dedicates/consecrates) God’s people for divine service, and brings salvific grace that is poured upon all who gather to behold the Lord’s presence and power.

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity. It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore” (Ps. 133:1–3 NIV).

This promised blessing is precisely what was experienced at Pentecost in Acts 2, where they were all together in one place when the day of Pentecost had come. Suddenly tongues of fire rested on all of those present. This Spirit-baptism enabled them all to supernaturally speak in tongues which, though unknown to them, were nevertheless discernible in the languages of the various nations represented. Peter then preached the gospel and promised the gift/baptism of the Holy Spirit to all who would respond to God’s call in Jesus Christ—resulting in the conversion of some three thousand people.

Hence, the unity of the church was a causal factor in the outpouring of the gift/blessing of the Lord, filling every believer and leading to the salvation and baptism of the lost by the

thousands! What is interesting is that just as the inauguration of the Old Testament of Moses resulted in the death of some three thousand people,

“The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died” (Ex. 32: 28 NIV),

so too did the birth of the new covenant/New Testament church result in the salvation of some three thousand people. “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41 NIV).

2. Vision: a Basic Human Need

Without the continual revelation of God’s Word in one’s life there will not be spiritual vitality. This means that just as one eats several times a day to maintain energy for natural life—so too should one be regularly feeding on God’s Word in order to maintain spiritual life and vitality.

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes [proceeds] from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4 NIV).

Needless to say, if one continually feeds on God’s Word he will reveal a vision for one’s personal life that conforms to God’s eternal purpose and generational intention. Rightly did Mark Twain muse, “The two most important days of your life are: The day you were born, and the day you realize why you were born.”¹⁵

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all the things you need will be provided for you as well” (Matt. 6:33 NIV).

This is the key verse that led the author to commit his life to Christ at the age of nineteen as the result of a conference in which Billy Graham preached the world-transforming message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Vision Brings Faith to Act and to Persevere

The clearer one's vision is, the more confident, bold, and courageous will one's actions also be. "The wicked flee when no one is chasing them; but the righteous are bold [literally confident] as lions" (Prov. 28:1 NASB). In other words, the wicked are running away even when no one is chasing them, whereas the righteous stand their ground even though under frontal assault. This is why, in order to combat Timothy's timid nature, the apostle Paul admonished him that God had not given him a spirit of fear, but of power (strength and courage), love, and a sound mind, which could be described as a heightened awareness and/or expression of common sense (see 2 Tim. 1:7).

Not only does vision cultivate a spirit of courage, so also does vision motivate one to *take action*. While others are waiting around in uncertainty and confusion, the one with vision is thereby empowered to take initiative—and do something! "But those who know their God will take action" (Dan. 11:32). "Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their kinsmen were at their command" (1 Chron. 12:32 NIV). The popular political activist, author, and revolutionary Thomas Paine (1737–1809), allegedly penned the zealous leader's mantra: "Lead, follow, or get out of the way."¹⁶

Furthermore, vision not only empowers one with confidence to take initiative, but it also helps one to persevere under trial. To persevere literally means to *persist under severity*. Essentially, severity implies the reality of suffering. The following three groups of verses contain a New Testament worldview of the inevitability and purpose of Christian suffering.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude . . . Dear friends, do

not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (1 Peter 4:1; 12–13 NIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1: 2–4 NIV)

We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” (Rom. 5:3–4 NIV)

The biblical exhortation is succinct in its challenge for all Christians: since Jesus suffered unto death in accomplishing God’s will regarding his sacrificial atonement, so too will all who desire to live godly in this present life experience suffering for the sake of righteousness (see Matt. 5:10) in fulfilling one’s particular destiny in service for Christ Jesus. Note that the Greek word for *witness* in Revelation 12:11 is the English transliteration of the word *martyr*. Such martyrdom is never to become an obsession with killing or being killed, as is the case with heretically religious jihadists. Neither is this call to suffering an overture to a radical kind of Gnostic asceticism.¹⁷ Rather, this is a sober reality regarding the willingness of every faithful believer in Jesus Christ to be obedient to sacrifice everything in this life, including, if absolutely necessary, even life itself, in one’s service for Christ. However, our victory is assured.

“They triumphed over him [Satan] by the blood of the

Lamb and by the word of their testimony [*lit.* μαρτυρίας/*marturias/martyr*]; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death [itself]” (Rev. 12:11 NIV).

Finally, it was the famed English poet and playwright Robert Browning Hamilton who captured the essence of a life that has learned to deal with suffering and sorrow for the sake of our service to Christ.

“I walked a mile with pleasure, she chattered all the way.
Leaving me none the wiser, for all she had to say.
I walked a mile with sorrow, never a word said she.
But oh the things I learned that day, when sorrow walked
with me.”

—Robert Browning Hamilton

4. Vision Requires Obedience

As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the [wilderness] rebellion.” For who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he [God] angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his [previously promised] rest—if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter because of their *unbelief*.¹⁸

Notice how it was lack of obedience, *not* lack of vision that kept the Israelites from inheriting the Promised Land. In other words, the giants did not keep them out—*their disobedience did*. In the same manner, God’s vision for each of our lives cannot be undermined by the fearful giants in our way, but simply by our lack of faith-born obedience—or what the author of Hebrews calls *unbelief*.¹⁹

“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”²⁰ Clearly, part of Paul’s confession here confirms the necessity

of and *compulsion*²¹ to obedience in response to divine vision. In other words, Paul could be saying, “I saw this vision from God and could do nothing else but comply ... I feel this overwhelming sense of divine obligation that bears me along through all manner of suffering in order that what God has revealed might be fulfilled.” As a result, vision both compels and empowers us to obey.

5. Vision Transforms Character

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love the Lord and who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed [or *transformed*]²² to the likeness of his Son.²³

Note how God’s purpose, which is communicated to us by spiritual vision, involves *both* an external working of things together for good—*and* an internal transformation of our character.²⁴ It is as if God has to use a compelling vision to motivate us to press toward a goal that can only ultimately be realized by the transformation of our being in conformity to the character of Christ. In other words, only as Christ is *formed* within (internally) can the work of God be accomplished *without* (externally). After all, motherhood (and/or fatherhood) are much more than merely giving birth to a child; they include love, nurturing, prayer, discipline, faith, priorities, financial resources, hope, encouragement, forgiveness, and a hundred other things that one did not expect to need to learn to be an effective parent. Again, Mark Twain assists us with his wit, which is paraphrased here: “When I was a boy, my father knew everything. When I became a teenager, my father knew nothing. When I turned 21, it was amazing how much the old man learned in just a few short years!”²⁵

6. Vision Creates a Plan to Succeed

This is where vision takes on a practical dimension in order for it to be realized. There are many whose obedience is ineffective simply because they have not yet discerned God's progressive calling to the necessity of strategic planning. We must realize that anyone motivated by godly vision is likewise commissioned to the task of planning in order for God's vision to be fully accomplished. There is a military adage called the Seven-Ps, which are adapted here as the 8Ps: *proper prior prayerful planning prevents pitifully poor performance.*

Many young pastors struggle with the entire concept of the need for organizational/executive management and strategic planning. Some might even fear that such a preoccupation could actually be unspiritual or carnal dependence upon the ways of man. However, in 1 Corinthians 12 there is actually a spiritual gift of administration listed in the same context as apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, and healing.

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:27–28 ESV).

To administrate means to manage, lead, direct, control, command, be in charge of, operate, run, steer, pilot, provide leadership, govern, supervise, oversee, or those activities that relate to running a company, school, church, or other organization.²⁶ In the author's personal quest to provide better organization for a growing church, he located a book called *The Art of Management for Christian Leaders*,²⁷ which had a profound effect upon the author's young pastoral leadership development years. The greatest impact

was that of providing an explanation and hence justification of the function of administration/management in assisting Christian leaders to accomplish their strategic goals. Such assistance results in courage to expand one's vision of the necessity of the spiritual gift of governmental administration/management in the local church as well as in a virtual plethora of other Christian enterprises.

Some Simple Facts About Planning

A plan is a way, method, or scheme one employs in order for a vision to be fulfilled. In other words, a plan involves at least two things: an objective or goal and a scheme or method to accomplish the objective. Two examples of real-life situations requiring the art of strategic planning are a football game plan and a flight plan for an airplane journey.

1. The objective in football is to win the game by scoring more goals/points than the opponent. The method to accomplish this objective requires, among other things, an offensive strategy, a defensive strategy, special teams, lots of coordinated practice together, etc.²⁸

2. In commercial flights the objective is to get passengers to their desired destination without incident. The method to accomplish this objective requires, among other things, a plane, a crew, passengers, distance information, required fuel, speed and altitude calculations, sky marshals, etc.²⁹

For those who may still be unconvinced that they will need strategic planning and managerial expertise to get to where God wants to take them, here are some encouraging scriptures that will confirm the importance of such an executive discipline.

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.³⁰

In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.³¹

Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.³²

For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord; plans for welfare and not for calamity—to give you a future and a hope.³³

Set up the tabernacle, according to the exact plan shown you on the mountain.³⁴

O men of Israel, Listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth by doing tremendous miracles through him ... But God, following his prearranged plan, let you use the Roman government to nail him to the cross ... But God released him from the horrors of death and brought him to life again.³⁵

A Personal Vision and Mission Statement

For all who may be new at writing down their vision, here is a personal example, with special tribute given to Bill Gothard (Institute in Life Principles) and Steven Covey (FranklinCovey) for their excellent instruction and example in this regard.

The Vision/Mission statement of Ron Woodworth (circa 1975)

By the love and grace of God, I have become a genuine disciple

and honored servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. My life is fully devoted to bearing as much *fruit* as possible for the glory of God. “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:8).

I believe that maximum *fruit bearing* will be realized as I utilize my primary spiritual giftings of leadership, communication (speaking and writing), and encouragement—in my *ministerial calling* to public ministry (preaching and teaching) and leadership development. “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice and teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

1. Specifically, God has empowered me, by his Spirit, to teach the foundations of the kingdom of God and the principles of New Testament church life.

2. The Lord has also envisioned, equipped, and burdened me to be a coach/mentor to many of the next generation of church and marketplace ministry leaders.

3. My ultimate goal is to help nurture the global restoration of the church in as broad a sphere as God will grant me opportunity and grace (see Acts 3:21). This I hope to accomplish through my public ministry, writing books, the media (radio, television, and Internet), church, and marketplace ministry consulting and personal coaching.

Central (not secondary) to *bearing fruit* as a disciple and minister of the Lord Jesus is my commitment to my family. I want to continue growing as a loving and effective husband and father in the following ways:

- A. Fulfilling my wedding vows
- B. Nurturing my children and grandchildren in the Lord
- C. Enjoying my life in the context of my family relationships

Simply stated, my life’s purpose is:

I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, JESUS

To learn ... to love ... to live ... to laugh ... to leave a legacy,
all for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Kingdom purpose
on earth (Acts 13:36a).