

# Where There is ~~No~~ VISION ... the People Perish

(Proverbs 29:18)

By Dr. Henry Harbuck—AEGA President/International Overseer

Every Christian has heard this verse quoted numerous times; however, usually out of context. A noun, the word “vision” (Heb. *mar’ eh*) in the Old Testament refers to prophetic visions or a revelation, and sometimes an appearance of God in some manner, not to be considered a manifestation. In the New Testament, “vision” as a noun (Gk. *horama*) more often refers to something manifest or actually *seen* such as the Transfiguration of Christ on the Mount (Matthew 17:9) witnessed by Peter, James and John. It may also refer to a night dream or a revelation received while in a semi-sleep state, such as in a trance. A vision or revelation may be given by God to a single person or to a group of people for direction. In a literal sense, the often quoted Proverbs 29:18 verse should be translated as, “Where there is no adherence to the *Law of God*, the people go astray—[that is, go in the wrong direction and die spiritually].” In this context, “vision” refers to the *Law of God* being that which directs people toward pleasing God in much the same way as the Word of God guides those who serve Him today in the New Covenant.

Sadly, many churches in America today are dying -- closing their doors because there is no vision. People go to church on Sunday and experience a *Greeting, Seating, Meeting, and Eating* – after which they go home and wait for the next service. When asked “What is the vision (mission) of your church?” most church members will respond “I don’t know.” Thus, it is of paramount importance that the vision of the local church be continually preached by the pastor and kept at the forefront of various other activities. All activities of the local church are important, but usually the vision suffers because it is *never mentioned by the leaders* (sometimes it is not mentioned because there is NO vision).

On numerous occasions, I have seen small churches begin to grow when the pastor and leadership placed a painting or architectural drawing of a future church facility on the platform where the congregation could see it at all times. It became a visual reminder to God’s people that the church was not dead like the stagnant water of the Dead Sea. A vision that is kept before the people brings purity and new life—[*that is, a fresh vision, spiritual growth, and new church members*]. A vision gives the congregation purpose, strength, and vitality. In fact, it’s always a good idea to have special offerings for the *vision* or new facility to reach more people for the Kingdom of God.

In the current economic downturn, some churches have given up and said “we perish.” Thus, it behooves pastors to preach victory, not defeat. More people are leaving the church now than in the history of our nation, and are looking to the government to supply their needs. But this is in sharp contrast to what the scripture says in Paul’s letter to the Phillipians: “But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phillipians 4:20). While we must not be insensitive or foolish about earthly matters, we must also realize that the wisdom of men will fail, but the Wisdom—[that is, Gk. *the Logos*, Christ, the Word, Wisdom, and Communication] of God will not. There is no doubt Paul is saying in Phillipians 4:20 that *...through Christ, God will supply what you need (not what you want) according to His abundant supply and His divine will*. When people who claim to be Christians have more of the world’s wisdom than the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:20-21), there is no faith resident in their lives and they have no peace. The Lord has promised to give every believer a degree of [inner] rest—*peace* (Gk. *anapauso*), regardless of what may be weighing them down.

Keeping a local church on track and in a growth mode is much like keeping the body in check. There must always be discipline and the desire to do better than the status quo. To merely attend church, experience some “goose bumps” and then go home is not enough to sustain a Christian. When there is no vision, no strategic planning, no sermons that meet needs, there will be death in the church. There will be no spiritual growth in the church because there is no spiritual growth in the people making up the congregation. A congregation is much like a baby; and if a baby is not growing, it is sick. Good parents immediately take the child to a doctor to determine what the problem is.

It is to our shame, as Christians, that Buddhists exhibit more discipline than we do. Buddhists fast and discipline themselves beyond what we could even imagine. But most Christians whine and complain about every small matter the church requires, giving one excuse after another why they cannot get involved. And even when they do become involved, it is usually only “lip-service” and nothing more.

Every church must have purpose -- a revelation, a direction, a plan to establish, a goal to reach. Sometimes the “word in due season” comes during a sermon, or in the form of a one-on-one statement. However, if the people have no vision, they will die spiritually. Based upon my experience, I am convinced pastors become involved in too many matters and neglect to speak of vision. When a vision is kept before the congregation, progress is made. Excitement and joy prevail, not hopelessness. And when everyone in a church is given a role to fulfill in a body of believers, the attention is diverted from the pastor. As people learn to minister to each other, they cease to believe the pastor is the only one who can “give a word”. When people are studying the Word of God for themselves, praying and showing concern for others in the Body of Christ, a flame is ignited. Life flows into the church. The church becomes “People Centered and Purpose Driven.”

If you are a pastor, or planning to become one, remember that “*Where there is no VISION, the people perish.*” Lastly, remember to focus not only on preaching, but on what is necessary for a congregation to grow spiritually and numerically. Today, anyone in America can stay home on Sunday and listen to a sermon delivered a TV preacher. The local church must provide more. It must be a place of refuge, healing, comfort and learning – a haven where someone feels he/she belongs because the people who attend care about each other.

*(All scripture quoted is from the King James Version of the Bible or the New Millenia In-Depth Bible)*

#### **COMMENTS ABOUT DR. HARBUCK’S ARTICLE**

***“When American Father’s Lose Their [Spiritual] Strength. . .  
They are Good for Nothing!”***

from the June 2009 issue of the Grapevine Newsletter

*Dear Dr. Harbuck,*

*I am so challenged of the issue you raised about USA drifting far away from the truth laid down by the founding fathers of America. Much of my desire, our country the Philippines, needs prayer of transformation just as in your country. We have a root that needs radical change in our country. We need true Christian values taught in our churches in order to bring us back to a Christian civilization.*

*Please pray for me, as the Lord has put a burden upon my heart to disciple our country through Christian Education. I am conducting training for teachers to teach the truth of the Lordship of Christ, I am assisting pastors on how to open Christian schools in their own churches. I believe that Christian education is the forefront of transforming our country back to God. Sometimes it seems I am alone like David fighting against the Goliath of secular humanism. Keep writing articles that inspire us to change...Hallelujah!*

**Pastor Temotio Yap—Philippines**

*Dear Dr. Harbuck*

*Thank you once again for your article. It seems as though we are fighting a losing battle in this country. A good friend of mine from Houston, Texas once wrote an article... “Fathers... Where are They?” I thank the Lord we still have men such as yourself that are not afraid to write and speak God’s Word just as it is. Great shall be your reward in Heaven.*

**Bishop Jack Ernest—Ohio**