

Vision, purpose, and planning: My personal goals for the future.

The church of the Living God in the country we call America is by large stagnant. Many people who call themselves Christians could not defend their faith if their lives depended on it. Cults run rampant and pull many who would call themselves Christians into their grasp. We are at war for souls and we could very well be running out of time. I believe that the answer of what to do is found in the Word of God. My vision? A series of New Testament based church plants. My purpose? To equip the saints for ministry: in their homes, their towns, and their world. How do I plan for this? By learning and applying principals on church planting from the Word, and by observing the example set by other successful church planters.

Paul: Apostle to the gentiles. His missionary journeys took him all over what was at the time the province of Asia, and through Greece, and eventually back to Rome as a prisoner. In his journeys everywhere he stayed he planted a church. He was the original tentmaker, literally, earning his living while ministering to the people of the city he was in. In Acts 18 it is telling about Paul's time in Corinth, in verse 11 it says that "*So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching then the Word of God.*" I believe that this is to be the example set for what I will do. Depending on the leading of God I will establish His church and then stay for one or two years. By that time leadership should have been established and ready to take over as I move on the next church plant.

Also part of the vision that God has given to me is for the churches that will be planted to be based on the cell church concept. Outside the main church body there will be cell groups of 8-12 or so for personal relationship building and growth. This will be part of the process of raising up leaders for ministry later on. I feel that the cell church ministry is very essential for the growth of individual growth and the growth of the church as a whole. For the individual it is a place to grow in the Word through the bible study times, it is a place to get closer to God during the worship time, and it is a place to raise up leaders by placing people as cell leaders and intern cell leaders.

The cell ministry is essential for the growth of the church as a whole because the cells are to be the place where most of the evangelism is to happen. It is much easier to get the lost to come to a bible study in your home, than to get them to go to "**CHURCH**," for many who have been hurt or are weary of the typified American church, a home bible study is something they would consider going to. Even then once they arrive at the home, they will be more open to the gospel than they would be in a large church setting, a group of ten people are much less threatening than a few hundred. In the same way it is also much easier for them to feel loved and cared for in a small group than in a much larger one.

The cell ministry should also extend beyond the adults into the youth as well. The youth of the church are a foundational part of the growth. To raise up and equip the youth for ministry should be one of the primary focuses of the church. They give the youth the same opportunity to grow personally, and to reach out to others as the adult cells. Also the youth however need times to come together as a whole in unity.

Leadership for the church later on can often come out of the proper discipleship the churches youth.

As a corporate body, the church should be ran in an orderly way, 1 Corinthians 14:33 tells us *“God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”* The church as a body must flow in an orderly fashion. In that same way however, we must be open to move with whatever the Spirit is doing, God’s will is more impotent than closing the service right at 11:30am on the dot. We are not to forbid anything that is biblical, as in the use of the spiritual gifts in a service, however all is to be done according to the Word. The Word tells us *“Therefore, my brothers, 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)

To equip the saints for ministry in: their homes, their towns, and their world. Part of this I have already discussed with you, much of the equipping of the body is to be done in their cell groups. However this is not all that is to be done, a much-overlooked need today is the need for one on one discipleship of the saints. Relationship building with another member of the body is a wonderful experience, and as you build your relationship with them, build them up in the Word also. This is done normally with new Christians but also it should be done to potential church leaders. If you are to raise them up into leadership you should know them personally, and know where they stand in their knowledge of the Word of God.

“After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila a native of Pontus, who has recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius has ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see

them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.” Acts 18:1-3

A need in the church that has recently been addressed is the need to equip those in the ministry with the practical knowledge in the Word to move into leadership. I believe that Vision International University (To be referred to as VIU) fills this gap. It allows a church to have a place to equip the leadership with solid biblical training. This will fit into the purpose I have extremely well, having everything from a one-year bible certificate, up to conferring a doctorate in theology. It offers the church as a whole, and ever more so the leadership that is to take over after I move on, a way to have training on the Word of God that is so deeply needed in the church today. VIU I believe will be a cornerstone of what I feel that God is planning to do in the ministry that He has given me. This subject of equipping the saint reminds me of Paul’s letters. He wrote them to instruct and to equip the churches; it is with that heart that I feel VIU will be an important part of equipping the saints. *“Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.” 1 Cor 12:1*

Now how does one plan for such an undertaking? I believe that first one must equip themselves for the task. I am doing this by getting practical ministry experience by working at Abundant Life Fellowship as an intern. Also I will be attending Christ for the Nations Institute for two or three years as God leads to strengthen myself personally with God and to gain a deeper knowledge of God’s Word. Equipping myself is a very important part of this being as God will bring me into the ministry when the timing is right and when I am ready to do the work He has for me to do.

Also to successfully plan something like this I must be vigilant in prayer for God's will do be done. Prayer must be the backbone of any of the church plants, we must submit ourselves to God's will and listen to Him in times of intimate prayer. God's plan is the one that will work the best, not mine.

When it is time for this to begin, many things must be established the essentials of running a functioning church must be set up. A place to meet is needed, be it a permanent place, or just a place to meet once a week where you set up and tear down every week. The basics of running the church need to be bought sound equipment, chairs, cables, cords, ect. A statement of beliefs for the church must be made. A budget for how the money is to be used must be established. Many other things big and small must also be done, but to list them here would be pointless, however all these things will fall into place correctly when we are in submission with God's plan.

The war for the souls of the lost is on. Again: My vision? A series of New Testament based church plants. My purpose? To equip the saints for ministry: in their homes, their towns, and their world. How do I plan for this? By learning and applying principals on church planting from the Word, and by observing the example set by other successful church planters. The cry of my heart is to build churches for God that will be an effective ministry, churches that take a stand against the evil one to take back what he has taken sevenfold, to see God's mercy poured out on a dying generation.