

The Glory of God in Future Planning

Various Scriptures

BI: From eternity past, proclaiming the excellencies of Christ has required not only faithfulness, but detailed future planning.

Every year at this time the elders ask me to stand before you and do some vision casting. We want you to know, as best we know, where it seems the Lord is leading us as a church. Having done this for the past five years or so it has been wonderful to see how the Lord uses these messages to inspire His people to rise to the occasion and often exceed our expectations in terms of ministry effectiveness.

Before we think about specifics, however, I want to spend a few minutes laying a biblical foundation for setting goals and laying plans for future ministry. With that in mind, please turn with me to Isaiah 46:9-11.

What I want us to see in this text that the glory of God and future planning are inextricably connected. In this passage God is calling His idolatrous people to remember something. He wants them to remember that He told them long ago about the severe discipline He planned to bring upon them if they rebelled against His covenant. Now it was happening just as He said. God was raising up Babylon to invade Judah and take His people captive for 70 years. Lets read this passage beginning in verse 9 (Read 9-11).

God is a God of future planning. Throughout Scripture we see God revealing His plan, accomplishing His plan, and then receiving glory for the fulfillment of His plan. What does it mean to be God? It means that your plans are always perfectly planed and executed exactly as they were intended. Everything that God plans to achieve is accomplished perfectly.

For example:

Can you imagine the kind of planning that went into creating a world with all the inter-related systems necessary to sustain life? And they all had to come on line at the same time.

Then in Genesis 1, God planned to create man and did it for a specific purpose: that they might reflect His image across the face of the entire earth.

Then when man sinned, God set in place a complex plan for man's redemption. He gives man a glimpse of that plan in Gen. 3, when He told Adam and Eve that someday a son of Eve would come and crush the serpents head.

The rest of the Bible is the story of How God has brought to fulfillment all the purposes He had planned for before he created the world. But it didn't end at the cross or the empty tomb! No, it continues to this very day. In Romans 8 Paul says, ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

In 1 Cor. 15 Paul calls it the resurrection.

The most amazing thing about his plan, however, is that God actually chose His elect from before the foundation of the world! (Eph. 1:4). Now that's future planning!

And consider this, the whole book of Revelation is about God telling us what His plan for the future is so that when it all happens just as He said, we will fall on our faces and give Him glory.

So you see, beloved, God's glory is inextricably connected with future planning. But it doesn't stop there. As image-bearers, human beings have a propensity to imitate God. Did you know Jesus also engaged in future planning?

Why did He travel into Galilee on John 1:44? Because there were some young men there whom he planned to call to be His disciples.

Why did He tell his disciples He needed to go through Samaria John 4? Because He had an appointment with a specific woman at a well, the outcome of which was that a great revival spread throughout Samaria.

Why did He set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem? Because His Father's plan was for Him to die on the cross on a very specific day - the Passover. Peter would say in Acts 2:23 "this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross.

In all of this, Jesus sought to glorify His Father by accomplishing His plan.

We could go on and on with examples, but it wasn't only Jesus who engaged in future planning. Paul also made specific plans for how to glorify God in His ministry.

Can you imagine the planning that went into Paul's missionary journeys all across Central Asia?

But unlike Jesus, Paul's plans were fallible. There were things he planned to do for the glory of God that did not happen as he planned it.

He told the Thessalonians (1 Thes. 2:18) "We wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and *yet* Satan hindered us."

And did you know that Paul fully intended to take the gospel to Spain?

Romans 15:28 "Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain."

As far as anyone knows, Paul never made it to Spain. He was beheaded in Rome before he was able to fulfill that plan. His plans were fallible. He knew that. But that didn't keep him from engaging in what was on many occasions some very complex future planning.

You see, beloved, proclaiming the excellencies of Christ to all nations requires not only faithfulness, but bold, God-exalting, detailed, future (often fallible) planning.

So I come to you this morning to reveal what the elders believe is a viable plan to maximize Calvary Bible Church's effectiveness at proclaiming the excellencies of Christ in the coming ministry year, and over the next 5-10-20 years, and beyond. So let's begin by talking about this coming ministry year.

I. Ministry Year 2011-2012:

Discipleship:

A. Last year our primary goal was to create a comprehensive strategy for making disciples of every believer or unbeliever who calls Calvary their church home. The Lord gave us good success in this objective. Currently we have 12 men and women actively involved in formally discipling 15 people.

B. This is a good start, but considering the fact that discipleship is the essence of the Great Commission, we still have a long way to go before we become a truly effective disciple-making church.

C. This year we intend to ramp up that ministry offering new ways to train our disciplers and get more people involved in personal ministry.

D. Honestly, we want Calvary Bible Church to develop a culture of discipleship where it is just assumed that if you are a Christian you are actively engaged in being disciplined and discipling others.

E. For training we intend to make better use of our web site so that we will not be so encumbered with having to have large training meetings here at the church.

F. On a more personal level, you may have noticed after church more and more people are praying together right here in the chapel. That is by design. I have asked for a commitment from all of our elders, staff, counselors and others to find someone in each worship service they attend that they can pray with. But frankly, we want every member of the church to commit to engaging in that kind of personal ministry every week. This is discipleship at its irreducible minimum. We'll never make progress in becoming a truly disciple-making church until we all become comfortable letting each other into our personal lives where needs can be discovered and prayed for.

G. There are a number of other things we have in mind relative to this goal, but this is the root.

H. Beyond that, we intend to continue sending teams out on short-term mission trips (if you are an able-bodied member of this church, you should go on one of these trips). By this time next year we hope to be able to send the Cupp family out to Africa fully funded. We are starting a Boy Scout troop for the purpose of training our boys to be men, and teaching them how to lead (Troop # 4031 "Those who wait on the Lord will renew..."). Next Month we are bringing in Dr. John Street and his wife Janie for a marriage retreat to help disciple couples (Oct. 28-30). Beyond that, I intend to preach a couple series of messages on what it means to engage in personal ministry. How do we obey the "one-

another” commands of Scripture? How can we become effective in “every-member-ministry.”

II. Long Term Planning:

1. Those of you who have been here for some time know that the elders have agonized over what to do about our space problem. You’ve seen us offer different architectural drawings showing what we think might be done. We even called a special prayer service this past June to jointly come before the Father asking for wisdom about how we should move forward. Today I’m here to tell you that we believe God has answered your prayers.

2. The question is, “How do we manage an consistent increase in membership with limited facilities?”

- A. Do we build something new?
- B. Do we buy an existing church facility?
- C. Do we purchase a warehouse or abandoned grocery store and transform it into a church facility?

Difficulties:

- A. We don’t have the funds to build a new chapel or buy a facility.
- B. We are committed to being debt-free.
- C. The Lord has not seen fit to drop \$2 million in our laps.

So what do we do?

3. Some of you have been a part of church building programs where the building plan gets bigger and bigger every time you see it. In our case, the plan gets smaller and smaller every time we present it.

4. Just to let you into the heart of the elders a little, none of us wants to waste a lot of the Lord’s money on buildings! We want our funds to go toward ministry and missions, and all kinds of things that will facilitate gospel growth both here and around the world. So what do we do?

5. Let me put the pieces on the table one at a time as I explain our decision.

A. **Chapel:** Since we are not willing to presume upon the Lord about money we don’t have, we have concluded that entering into a major building and fundraising campaign is not what God wants us to do. So part of the answer to the building issue is that we are staying here in the facilities the Lord has given us at least for the foreseeable future. This may mean we have to offer a third worship. If we get to that point we will have to conclude that, uncomfortable though it may be, it is what the Lord desires of us. And we are resolved to be faithful.

B. Church Planting: I have known for a number of years that Brent and Keri desire to plant a church like Calvary in another community here in the metroplex. I know for some that's a frightening thought. It's hard to plant a church. We know that from experience. But just because it's hard doesn't mean the Lord doesn't want us to do it. Now, sending the Osterbergs and another couple away with 50 other people won't do a lot about our space problem, but it will do something that the elders believe will honor the Lord.

C. We believe our focus of our ministry should not be limited to our local church. God has not called us to build *our* church, but to build *The* church. We want Calvary to be a training and sending church. And the thing that really encourages us in this regard is that God is already doing that here!

Think about Brent. God brought him here as a young, green, wet-behind-the-ears seminary student. In the years he and Keri have been here he has become an excellent preacher, discipler and leader! While still in Seminary, I began discipling Brent in pastoral ministry. He always used to tell me, "I'm going to seminary to get my degree, but I'm coming to Calvary to get my education."

Why couldn't the Lord do that with other men, too? What would keep Calvary from becoming a church that trains and sends out young men to plant new churches? That's what Calvin did! What would keep us from building like-minded, Christ-exalting, Scripture proclaiming church all around us. We would be the sending church. We would offer continued training in all aspects of discipleship. We would be multiplying the ministry that God has built here at Calvary? We would be a disciple-making church committed *NOT* only to discipling individuals, but discipling fledgling churches as well.

The biggest obstacle I see to this plan is how do we replace Brent? Where does that kind of leadership come from? We don't have anyone in the body right now who is trained theologically. Where do we find replacement leadership? To me this seemed like the insurmountable obstacle. But then I went out to Masters College for my week of on-campus class time in July. At the end of that week I was approached by two different young men who are on staff at Masters who asked me, "Pastor Dan, do you have any pastoral staff positions available in your church?"

I was stunned! These are really high-quality men who love Christ, know his word, have been well trained, are highly respected, and view ministry exactly like we do. One of the guys in particular struck me as a man who if you didn't know better, you might think he grew up in our church!

I came away from that thinking, "Lord, why did you do that? Why did you put these two men in my path the way you did?" My conclusion is that the Lord was showing me that even if neither of these two men ever come to Calvary to take a pastoral staff position, there are men that God is raising up who share our theology, our philosophy of ministry, our commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture and Biblical counseling, who could slip into the ministry of Calvary Bible Church as seamlessly as Brent did.

Beloved, I believe this is the direction God is calling us to. He is calling us *NOT so much* to become a big church, but to become a training and sending church.

Now, someone will ask, “What does that have to do with a building? Where did we land on that issue?” That’s a good question. Our conclusion is that we should indeed build one modest building on our existing site. It would be a fairly simple Fellowship-Hall-like structure with a warming kitchen for fellowships and a large space that can be divided up into smaller rooms for classes or whatever. What will we use it for?

Perhaps an evening service at the same time AWANA meets on Sunday evening
Flock meetings.

More Sunday School classes

Facilities for training conferences with tables and chairs rather than pews.

Better facilities for a growing Mother/Daughter ministry

More sufficient facilities for Father/Son ministry

Boy Scout Troop

Women’s fellowships

Outreach Events

Wedding Receptions

Showers

Candle-light and other large worship services

A hundred other uses.

Instead of building a beautiful \$2.8 million facility, let’s spend \$800 thousand on a modest facility that will enable us to become a church that is more effective at making disciples, training leaders, and planting churches.

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