**The Power of a Focused Life**

**Theme:** Keeping the main thing the main thing

**Text: Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)** Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keeps the law, happy is he.

**(NKJV)** Where *there is* no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy *is* he who keeps the law.

**(Complete Jewish Bible)** Without a prophetic vision, the people throw off all restraint; but he who keeps *Torah* is happy.

**Introduction:** Vision brings focus or clarity to our lives and plans. We could say that vision serves as a life compass. It brings our lives back into proper focus. Vision brings all the chaos and activities we are bombarded with back to a point of reference. A vision can help us set boundaries in our lives. It helps us to keep the main thing the main thing. It defines the bottom line. A vision helps us to determine if what we are doing is contributing to or detracting from the main objective. It forces us to ask defining questions, such as, is this activity or project contributing to the main objective or leading me away from it?

 **Proverbs 29:18 (God’s Word translation**) Without prophetic vision people run wild…

**Where there is no vision of God’s moral decrees, no vision of Torah (the commandments), people throw off all restraint and run wild.**

 **Proverbs 12:8 (World English Bible)** The wicked walk on every side, when what is vile is exalted among the sons of men.

**Moral Relativism:** We are witnessing firsthand, the abysmal fruit of the doctrine of moral relativism.

 **Judges 21:25 (NLT)** In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

 The word of God gives people a vision of moral uprightness. It is a spiritual moral compass to bring our lives and society on course with God’s standards of righteousness. Without God as the moral arbitrator of what is right and wrong, people will naturally gravitate toward their most debased appetites.

*“If there is no God, then everything is my will and I must express my will…If God does not exist, everything is permitted”* ***Dostoevsky, ‘The Brothers Karamazov’***

America has become a nation adrift. We are like a ship that is lost at sea, in the fog of human reason and moral relativism. We are heading for destruction, if we do not repent and turn back to God’s moral standards.

 **Psalm 9:17 (NLT)** The wicked will go down to the grave. This is the fate of all the nations who ignore God.

**I. Vision as a Compass A. Vision is a compass that helps us to stay on course.**

 **1.** A vision helps us to follow what is best for our lives as opposed to what is good.

 **2.** There are so many good ideas and good causes that will not ultimately take us where we want to go.

 **3.** It is never wrong to do right. But many good ideas and causes may actually lead us off course, slow us down, uses energy and resources we need to fulfill our vision.

 **4.** Activity does not equal fruitfulness. This is especially vital in a culture of hyperactivity.

 **Doctors Mary Sword and Philip Zambardo in an article called ‘The Time Cure,’**

At one time or another, many of us have experienced what Gardner Merchant calls hurry sickness. Merchant, a contract caterer, conducted research on about 10,000 people in the UK in order to assess the developing needs of British businesses. By definition, hurry sickness is “a behavior pattern characterized by continual rushing and anxiousness; an overwhelming and continual sense of urgency.” As if that isn’t bad enough, it’s also defined as “A malaise in which a person feels chronically short of time, and so tends to perform every task faster and to get flustered when encountering any kind of delay.” Sound familiar?

In 1992 the Country group Alabama released the number one hit song ‘In a Hurry.’ The chorus resonated with a culture knee deep in hurry. *I’m in a hurry to get things done. I rush and rush until life’s no fun. All I really gotta to do is, live and die, but I’m in a hurry and don’t know why?*

**II. Less Can Be More A. Vision can help us prune activities that are burning our time and energies. John 15:1-5 (NLT)** “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. **2**He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. **3**You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. **4**Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. **5**“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

 **1. The entire chapter of Hebrews 12 is about renewing our vision so that it is fixed upon eternity.**

 **Hebrews 12: (NLT)** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. **2**We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joyawaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. **3**Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people;then you won’t become weary and give up. **4**After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. **5**And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline,  and don’t give up when he corrects you. **6**For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.” **7**As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? **8**If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. **9**Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

**10**For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. **11**No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. **12**So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. **13**Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

 **B. Vision serves as a compass to help us correct course and navigate back in the direction we should be heading. M**

**III. Vision is Organic**

 **A. Because vision is organic, we may have to change course for a season because conditions and circumstances change.**

 **1.** There is a vast difference between sailing on a calm sea as opposed to a raging storm. Just as rowing across a lake is far different than shooting down the rapids of a raging river.

 **2.** The storms and circumstances we face in life may blow us off course for a season or require us to adjust within the context of vision.

 **B. We all face different seasons 1.** Because we face different seasons, we must make course adjustments to navigate through those changes.

 **2.** Many companies that at one time were Fortune 500 businesses have not survived some of the changes of the business world. As just one example. Xerox had the opportunity to develop the personal computer, but leaders in the company could not see the potential and rejected the opportunity.

 **3.** A number of major churches in America, that at one time were some of the largest denominations are rapidly declining and many will soon go the way of the dinosaurs. They will be extinct.

 **C. The challenges of this hour are unprecedented in human history. 1.** The pace of change in this era can seem overwhelming. Technology, fueled by modernity is unraveling the fabric of society at every level.

 **2.** The rate of change is like nothing human beings have ever experienced. These changes are presenting some very real challenges in navigating in the 21st century, and these will only become far more challenging.

 **3.** I don’t think anyone in my generation of the baby boomers or older could have ever imagined that the rate of moral decay we are facing would deteriorate as rapidly as it has in the past few years.

 **D. Challenges in navigating through these cultural shifts have been blown some ministries and Christians so far off course they may never find their way back.**

 **1.** We are witnessing firsthand how many well-known ministries are being shipwrecked by modernity and compromise with the culture. They may have large followers, but the moral rot has so infested their ranks that they may never recover.

 **2. Vision keeps our focus on God and His Kingdom and pursuits.**

* **The Authority of Scripture**
* **The coming of the Kingdom of Christ**
* **The resurrection of the dead**
* **The coming judgment**

 **3. Vision keeps eternity in our sights.**

**Colossians 3:1-4 (Amp)** Therefore if you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, sharing in His resurrection from the dead], keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2**Set your mind *and* keep focused *habitually* on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. **3**For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. **4**When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.