

AN ILLUSTRATION OF DREAMS: THE BEGINNINGS OF FOCUS

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“ALL MEN DREAM: BUT NOT EQUALLY. THOSE WHO DREAM BY NIGHT...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.”

T. E. LAWRENCE (1888 - 1935)

A NOTE OF CONFESSION

Sitting down to write this, I realized that the paper was supposed to be in regards to an event in the past year and I could have easily wrote on my leadership role in service week or even Bonnie's and my parts in our small group. However, with my internship coming up I have had troubles this year answer one question that has left me shaking in regards to my future. Why am I in Bible College? What purpose do I serve in God's Church and what step am I supposed to take next?

Truth is, three years ago I came in search of finding a theological and philosophical understanding on how to teach Martial Arts within a Christian context. Instead, within the first year God took my dream and proliferated it immensely. Instead of thinking of ideas of a simple studio, I began dreaming of a church community. A dream that I seem to never be able to shake.

The problem is that although God seems to share this vision of that community with me, I find it difficult to see the way in which he wishes me to start. Although wanting to pursue that dream, I also want to remain within his will. So, what is the next step?

That is where this paper (I hope) will come into play. When Ron Fraser suggested its composition in the form of a church plant I saw an opportunity to put some of my ideas down on paper in order to pursue guidance within a focused, targeted manner and be able to find supervised spiritual advice from an experienced Christ like advocate. My prayer being that even though I did not remain in the confines of the paper outline, I will still find leadership fulfillment (purpose) and guidance as to the next step. If not...my sincerest apologies!!!

THE VISION – THE DAY DREAMS OF A MAD MAN

As I mentioned earlier, I began College with a specific intent. Instead, God shared a dream with me that is in my thoughts night and day. I can't help but find passion in the pursuit of fulfilling those thoughts.

A church that is focused on the balanced faith of the community within the greatest commandment Jesus shared with us. The pursuit to “Love the Lord our God with all our heart's, all our soul's, all our strength's, and all our minds. And to, Love our neighbors as ourselves.” (Luke 10:27). The question is how do we do that?

The beginning's of dreams. The heart is the center of life. Something that finds itself described physically (1 Sam. 25:37-39) and affected by the physical life we live (Judges 19:5; Psalm 104:15; Acts 14:17). The heart also is described as being psychological, affecting our emotions, attitudes, and views we have about life (John 12:40; 1 Kings 3:9; Mark 2:6; Luke 2:19; Luke 2:51; Deuteronomy 8:17; Luke 1:51; Ecclesiastes 1:17; Exodus 28:3). Finally, it can also be reflective of our hidden selves and the place where we find our spiritual natures (Jeremiah 17:10; Luke 9:47; Romans 8:27; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Matthew 5:8; Psalm 27:8; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 3:17).

To love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbor equally, itself needs to be guided and exemplified by the church. The church can then serve the community by building relationships and developing ministry (i.e. preaching, group activities, classes in nutrition and exercise) that focus on living faithfully and responsibly with our whole hearts intent on loving God our Father.

The soul of a Christian disciple gives meaning to the very aspect of life. Often through out scripture it is illustrated in the way we serve others (Acts 15:26; cf. John 13:37; Romans 16:4; Philippians 2:30; Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 10:14, 17-18). I suppose in some way, it is the value of the gift of life that God gave us.

In the pursuit of Christ's command it seems to fit a role for the church to serve a communities needs in the interest of their souls. Something of which can be exercised through the church promoting relationship's with our neighbors and serving their needs whether they are apart of the church or not and despite their denomination or background. Perhaps it can be pursued through

groups from the church that could just go out door to door, building relationships with community members and fulfilling their needs (i.e. sidewalks shoveled, lawns mowed, groceries) without looking for payment beyond the spiritual satisfaction that we are serving God in these people's lives. Perhaps, the church itself can pursue these goals as a community by holding public events such as BBQ's, Baseball games, guest speakers, and community programs (babysitting, marriage classes, financial guidance) all within the focus of Biblical faith and drawing people to Christ.

To look to the mind, scripture describes the responsibilities of Christian mental thought and the desire for understanding (Mark 12:33; 1 Corinthians 14:14-19; Romans 12:2). The aspiration being to put all thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The dream being a church that pursues the education of all Christians in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:4-10) through both seeker and believer services, classes of spiritual and theological natures, and the practice of shared service (teaching, preaching, small group Bible studies ect.).

I left the idea of strength till the end for this reason. How do we find and exercise the love for God and our neighbor with all our strength? Perhaps another way to look at it; how do all these past things take place within a single church? Simple answer; through discipleship and the building on the strengths of the community itself. As each person grows in faith we can encourage one another to share that faith within our community (Romans 12:4-5). Preaching times can be shared with other members of the congregation, teaching can be done according to the strengths of the members of the church, locations do not have to be restricted by a building but can be in open environments of parks and other buildings within the community, and testimonies of service can be the catalyst to inspiring others to "Love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. And to Love our neighbor as our selves."

Through out scripture, God spoke through dreams and visions and although I do not think my dream is of any new idea (Ecc. 1:9), I cannot help but think it has some purpose. My prayer is that God will allow me to have some role in bringing my dream into reality which comes to the next point. What are some specific tactics to which I can pursue this vision?

SPECIFIC TACTICS

This is perhaps the point at which I am at now! Without looking at it from deep research I would like to pursue an answer from my own thought processes and an expression of the faith or promptings to which I have been feeling in prayer.

It seems that experience is the beginning to knowing how to build my dream. Something to which I feel is witnessing the building blocks of church growth such as a church plant. To be involved in a church plant would expose me to the ideas and understandings of how God works in small communities and builds within them. It would also allow me to learn about the challenges to which they may face.

I also feel led to take a leadership role perhaps in small group ministries. It seems connected to understanding growth and gives the freedom to practice other possible developments within the church in different areas (developing programs, events, and activities). I can also develop relationships with other leaders in the church (build “alliances” with other churches and share ideas of community growth).

Education is always a consideration and a passion (M.Div.). However, I can't help but feel that it needs to take a slower possess. In future I would like to continue taking classes but balance them with my continued work within a church.

Beyond these specific goals I cannot think of any other tactics to which I can pursue. I rely heavily on the faith that God will guide in future as I follow him.

PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE RESOLVMENTS

The possibility of any problems I have found have only been in my own self doubt. It is an issue which connects with the confidence to which I sometimes struggle. The fear that “dreams never come true”. It is true that sometimes I feel similar to that of Moses in the scriptures. Why would God share this vision with me? Who am I?

Perhaps the only driving force I sometimes sense is the persistence I feel in prayer with God and my desire to please him. The only resolution I have come to find is the growth of experience. Something to which I am excited and passionate for.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

For some reason I do not see success in the same way as others do around me. My only measure of success is the hope that God's will is accomplished. In view of my dream it is hoped that I would begin to see these activities taking place in the lives of those in the church that I am working.

As I talked about earlier, I see testimonies as being the catalyst for the inspiration of faith in believers and the community as a whole. To see more people sharing testimonies of Christ's actions in their lives is the greatest success story which I look for. It is a success which I think should be shared in corporate worship with the community.

AN EDUCATION ON LEADERSHIP

Understanding leadership this semester has brought the value to me of the importance of integrity. With the belief that all people possess leadership qualities and in bringing it out in them it is of the most importance to lead through the integrity of exemplifying a personal relationship with Christ Jesus. Leadership is first found in the presence of Christ and even though in our own eyes it may seem like chaos we can have faith that Christ will exceed his purposes.

CONCLUSION

There are many more thoughts I have had attached to my dream of a church construct to which expand on many of the principles I put in this paper but this is where I am at right now. It seemed constructive to place some of the ideas on paper and in future I would like to continue to expand on them as God continues to speak to me in my dreams.

“AND THEY SAID ONE TO ANOTHER, BEHOLD, THIS DREAMER COMETH.
COME NOW THEREFORE, AND LET US SLAY HIM, AND CAST HIM INTO SOME
PIT, AND WE WILL SAY, SOME EVIL BEAST HATH DEVoured HIM; AND WE SHALL
SEE WHAT WILL BECOME OF HIS DREAMS.”

GENESIS 37:19-20 KJV