

# Hindrances To Vision

**Introduction.** Just the mention of the word evangelism can produce a negative reaction from Christians. You may even secretly think that evangelism is a waste of time — but this thinking needs to be challenged. The failure of any group of Christians is not in the message.

Successful evangelism starts with developing a biblical view of the world. We want to view the world through the eyes of Jesus, and He wanted us to lift up our eyes (John 4:35). What do you see? Ungodliness? Yes. Religious indifference? Yes. No one to convert? No. The fields are white for harvest.

This is the vision that we need to have. We need to see what Jesus saw. We need to develop an unshakeable conviction that the world (both our little world and the world at large) can be reached with the gospel.

There are five accounts of the great commission. The church that doesn't have this vision of the world, that doesn't make the effort to reach the world, that doesn't want to grow, is disobedient. We don't really grow for our benefit. We grow because God wants it (2 Peter 3:9) and because people need Jesus (Colossians 2:19).

While Jesus wants us to envision a field white for harvest, what if our vision of the world is distorted? Before you start anywhere else with the church not growing, you need to ask if there's something hindering your vision. And that normally comes down to capability and mindset. With that in mind, let's look at hindrances to vision.

## ***I. Limited Leaders***

- A. These are people who, for whatever reason, haven't caught the vision. Everything rises and falls on leadership. A congregation usually can't rise above her leaders. This especially true of casting vision.
- B. A limited leader will either lack vision or the ability to successfully pass it on. The Prime Minister of France said, "If you are doing big things, you attract big men. If you are doing little things, you attract little men. Little men usually cause trouble."
- C. Our leaders have a vision, and as we develop our future leaders we need to look for men who can see the world like Jesus. The task given to leaders is to "shepherd the church of God" (Acts 20:28) and to "set in order the things that are lacking" (Titus 1:5). This is going to take more than limited men!

## ***II. Concrete Thinkers***

- A. These are people who can't see beyond present circumstances. Charlie Brown held up his hands before his friend Lucy and says, "These are hands which may some day accomplish great things. These are the hands which may some day do marvelous works. They may build mighty bridges, or heal the sick, or hit home runs, or write some soul-stirring novels. These are hands which may someday change the course of destiny." Lucy, who always sees things as they are replies, "They've got jelly on them."
- B. Some people are seemingly incapable of seeing past things as they are. Jesus, when He chose the twelve, saw them, not for what they were, but for what they could become — fishers of men (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). And they definitely weren't perfect (Galatians 2:11-15), but they were effective.

### **III. Dogmatic Talkers**

- A. These are people who aren't team players. They talk dogmatically about things they know little about.
- B. Charles H. Duell, director of the U.S. Patent Office said in 1899, "Everything that can be invented has been invented." Lord Kelvin, of England's Royal Scientific Society said in 1885, "Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." Baseball great, Tris Speaker, was quoted in 1921 as saying, "Babe Ruth made a big mistake when he gave up pitching."
- C. Many visions aren't realized because of strong, dogmatic people. It's as if they mistake the fires of evangelism for wildfires that must be extinguished and they're always there with a cold, wet blanket. I've found that some of the most dogmatic people about evangelism are people who know nothing about it.
- D. While we may be infused with "weakness and in fear and much trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). God has infused His word with power — it's a sharp sword that defeats the power of Satan and sin (Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 19:15) — if it's pulled out of its scabbard and used.

### **IV. Continual Losers**

- A. These are people who can't see past their failures. There are too many Christians who look at their past failures and fear the risk of pursuing a vision.
- B. Both Moses (Numbers 11:11-15) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:4) needed a reset when it came to their perception of their abilities to serve God.
- C. Some Christian's motto is, "If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you've ever tried." One predominate characteristic of people with vision is that they are not afraid nor ashamed of failure (Proverbs 24:16).

### **V. Satisfied Sitters**

- A. These are people who are satisfied with the status quo and don't want better. They strive for comfort, predictability, and security in life. They are fully satisfied when they get there. They are afraid of and resistant to change.
- B. On the heels of comfort comes complacency; of predictability, boredom; of boredom, security; and of security, no vision. A nest is good for a robin while it's an egg, but it's bad for a robin when it has wings. It's a good place to be hatched in, but a poor place to fly in. It's always sad when people don't want to leave the nests of their lives.
- C. Before the Babylonian captivity, God was displeased with the people who were "stagnant in spirit" (Zephaniah 1:12). Churches who develop the same spirit will need to be zealous and repent (Revelation 3:19).

### **VI. Tradition Lovers**

- A. These are people who hang on to the past and won't let go. For centuries, it's been said that we stand on the shoulders of giants — and I believe it. Great men have come before us, made great sacrifices, and paved the way for our work in the kingdom. Without their work, I doubt we could have progressed as we have.
- B. But let's remember that there are many things that change with time. Our message doesn't change but our methods will have to. We understand that

culture changes and therefore we can't expect to convert a 21st Century society with 20th Century methods. Those methods are updated by wise and forward-thinking congregations.

- C. We can't let our love and nostalgia for out-dated methods stand in the way of our vision. Paul could "press on toward" (Philippians 3:13-14) a brighter future for his life, and we can do the same to be "a glorious church" (Ephesians 5:26-27).

### ***VII. Census Takers***

- A. These are people who are pulse feelers. They count noses and go along with the crowd. Some never feel comfortable stepping out of a crowd. They want to be a part of, not different from, the group. These are good followers; but they only embrace the vision when the majority does. They are never in front.
- B. True leaders are often in the minority because they are thinking ahead of the present majority. When the majority catches up, these leaders will have moved ahead and so, again, will be in the minority.
- C. May we never be people who fear to "speak word with boldness" (Acts 4:31) because we possess the "fear of man" within us (Proverbs 29:25).

### ***VIII. Problem Perceivers***

- A. These are people obsessed with the obstacles that may arise. Some can see a problem in every solution. They say, "I don't think we can do this; I foresee nothing but problems." We need to learn to not trust in our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). A wise man once said, "Nothing would get done at all if a man waited until he could do something so well that no one could find fault with it."
- B. Interestingly, some people think the ability to see problems is a mark of maturity. Not necessarily so. Sometimes it's the mark of a person without a vision. People who present problems without solutions can stand in the way of great accomplishments. Usually, obstacles are things you see when you take your eyes off the goal. The Hebrew Christians were not to "cast away their confidence" even though they had suffered losses (Hebrews 10:32-35).

### ***IX. Self-Seekers***

- A. These are people who are focused on themselves (Philippians 2:21). People who live for themselves are in a mighty small business.
- B. They never accomplish very much. Selfish people are vision killers. Great goals are only reached by the united effort and support of the group.
- C. In seeking other people's well-being (1 Corinthians 10:24), we are moving the church forward to the goal of conversions to Christ.

### ***X. Failure Forecasters***

- A. These are people who can't see success. Some people have a faculty for touching the wrong keys. From the finest instrument they extract only a discord. All their songs are in a minor key. They send the note of pessimism everywhere. The shadows dominate all their pictures. Their outlooks is always gloomy, times are always bad, and money is tight. Everything in them seems to be contracting; nothing in their lives expands or grows.

- B. These people are like the man who gathered with a large crowd at the Hudson River to see the first steamship launched. He kept saying, “They’ll never get it going.” But they did. The steamship emitted a thick, black smoke and moved down the river. Immediately the same man said, “They’ll never get it stopped.” I like the Chinese proverb that says, “The man who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the man who is doing it.”
- C. We are assured that “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7) because we “can do all things through Christ who strengthens” us (Philippians 4:13). Although there will be failure when we try to make disciples of Jesus Christ, the real question will be in how we recover from that failure and keep moving on.

**Conclusion.** Let’s shed the negative thinking in our lives and see the world they way Jesus does (Hebrews 11:1-2). If you really care about people coming to Christ, the results of the early church are very uplifting (Acts 1:8; 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 8:4; Colossians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). If we develop the attitude of Jesus, then we’ll find the methods that work — and we’ll lead people to Jesus.