



The Vision of the Father

◀ God Almighty has a vision for your life. He has a plan for your ministry. His design for you is so much grander than anything you could ever fantasize. You have been in the heart and mind of God since eternity past. What he has in store for you goes infinitely beyond your greatest ambitions, hopes, and aspirations. You are important to God. You are vital to the fulfilling of his ultimate vision for the world. By reading this book you've begun fulfilling God's thrilling destiny for your life.

This plan involves you partnering with God in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20. We are called to multiply spiritual sons and daughters who will, in turn, make more disciples for Jesus. There is no greater cause that we can devote our lives to than helping our Father save his lost children from the devil's eternal lake of fire. Your life will not only impact but change eternity for countless souls.

Discovering God's vision is one of the most important things we will ever do. By committing our lives to God's vision, we will take part in the salvation of countless people. We will be eternally blessed. We will give God great glory by bearing much fruit for him. By pursuing God's vision, we'll also encounter our greatest joy and personal fulfillment.

Nothing else you will ever do or give your life to can compare to what God wants you to do for him. God's vi-

sion for you is why he created you; it is why you are on this planet.

God's Word is clear—without a vision we perish.¹ Knowing this, pastors and Christian leaders all over the world nevertheless struggle to articulate a compelling vision for their churches. A vision is important; God's vision is all-important. We need to make sure that our own vision matches his great big vision.

Let's back up a bit and find out exactly what the ultimate, big-picture vision of our heavenly Father actually looks like. Only by focusing our lives and ministries on accomplishing his vision do we succeed in realizing his will for ourselves and our churches. Let's invest in his vision rather than in our own grandiose schemes. What we think would help the cause of Christ and his kingdom falls pitifully short of God's plans. God's vision is phenomenally greater and infinitely more exciting than any vision we could ever come up with on our own.

What is the vision of God Almighty for us and his planet? Why did he create us in the first place? What is his eternal agenda for his people and his church? What is his powerful, consuming vision? Does Scripture give us any clues about his all-encompassing vision?

Thankfully, the answer is yes!

A significant hermeneutical (the rules and principles of biblical interpretation) statute is called "The Law of First Mention."² This is the guideline that encourages us to examine the first mention of a specific word or concept in the Bible. Often that gives us a clue to understanding how the Lord views that subject and how it *stands connected in the mind of God*.³

The first time the word “vision” is used in the Bible is found in Genesis 15:1—“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a *vision*” (emphasis added). Of course, this is part of the Abrahamic covenant. In this first divine vision, God tells Abram that he is going to have a baby boy. From this child would come descendants too many to count, “as the stars of the heavens” (Gen. 22:17). God greatly multiplied Abraham’s seed beyond anything Old Abe could imagine.

God’s vision for Abram involved countless sons and daughters who would be “multiplied” to him. This included his immediate blood relatives, the descendants of Isaac (the Jews), the descendants of Ishmael, *and* spiritual children through Jesus Christ. God’s ultimate vision involves the multiplication of spiritual sons and daughters to the descendants of Abraham.

Paul tells us that we Gentiles who have put our faith in Christ are the true spiritual descendants of Abraham.⁴ Interestingly, in Hebrews 2:16 the author writes this wonderful promise to us: “For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to *the descendant of Abraham*” (emphasis added). He is talking about God’s born-again children, those who claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Christians, he is talking about you and me!

Through Jesus Christ, I am a “descendant of Abraham.” I can both claim and count on God’s help as I obey him by getting after the vision of the Father. Praise the Lord!

The very first command—remember “The Law of First Mention”—that God ever gave humans is found in Genesis 1:28: “God blessed them; and God said to them, *‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’*” (emphasis added). It is

God's decree, his founding vision, that we be fruitful and multiply.

Certainly the Lord had biological reproduction and procreation in mind, but is that all he was thinking about? If that is so, then what about single people such as Jesus and Paul? How can the chaste and sexually pure fulfill this command? They don't produce babies. What about couples who would love to have biological children but are barren? Our Lord meant biological multiplication, but he also meant *spiritual* multiplication. Every Christian, married or single, can be fruitful and multiply spiritual sons and daughters.

When we get to the New Testament, being fruitful and multiplying doesn't simply mean having lots of babies. It means spiritual fruit. God wants us to be totally faithful and very fruitful. Jesus taught that good soil produces a crop of good fruit that multiplies thirty times, sixty times, even one hundred times.⁵ Jesus is not referring to fruitful wombs that produce huge litters of human infants. Rather, he is talking about spiritual fruit.

Jesus told us in John 15:8 that "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear *much fruit*, and so prove to be My disciples" (emphasis added). The whole thrust of John 15:1-16 is about "fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit," and "fruit that lasts."⁶

Fruit in the New Testament can refer to the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of good works, the fruit of our lips (such as praise and thanksgiving), and the ultimate spiritual fruit that lasts—souls. If the Lord evaluated your life right now, would he declare that you have produced "much fruit" for his glory? After all, that is his vision for our lives.

Larry Stockstill says that “God’s ultimate vision involves the massive multiplication of spiritual sons and daughters. It has always been in the heart and mind of God from eternity past to populate a world and later the New Jerusalem with billions of redeemed, holy, spiritual sons and daughters who obey his Word and who passionately and supremely love him eternally and worship him with all of their hearts and who will be the intimate, loving Bride of Jesus Christ forever!”⁷

To do this, God uses the wondrous, almost miraculous principle of multiplication. Addition alone won’t work. Multiplication can win the entire world in one generation. Imagine if we got serious about multiplying disciples who then multiply other disciples. This exponential multiplication of disciples who make disciples could literally reach the entire population of the world in a few short years!

Spiritual multiplication starts slow and small. Initially addition is quicker, but in the end, multiplication far outstrips the greatest addition. Multiplication ushers us into the realm of unlimited, supernatural, eternal results!

Spiritual multiplication involves the personal discipling and spiritual parenting of all believers until they become spiritual parents themselves. They will reproduce spiritual children who, in time, become spiritual parents who continue reproducing new believers.

We do not truly reproduce or multiply, either biologically or spiritually, when we simply raise our children. If our children never have children themselves, then our “line” ends when they die. We reproduce only when we raise *parents* of children. This is valid in both the physical realm and the spiritual world.

Too many Christians are content only to see people find Christ. They haven't worked with these new Christians long enough or with the personal, focused intentionality that it takes to raise them into spiritual parents of other reproducing spiritual parents.

Our God is a God of multiplication. This is abundantly clear from the very first pages of his Word. His vision for us involves this reproduction. Satan is incredibly afraid of God's people who are involved in the spiritual multiplication of the disciples of Jesus!

Acts 6:1 notes that "the number of the disciples was *multiplying*" (NKJV, emphasis added). When I read that, I can't help but compare that statement with what I see in my own church. Are the people who claim to follow Christ in the church I pastor truly multiplying Christlike disciples of Jesus, or are we just coming to church and hanging out until the rapture?

It is God's vision for you and me that we multiply disciples of Jesus Christ. Is that happening in your local church? Is that an accurate description of your life and ministry? Would others be able to say of you that you are actually *multiplying disciples*?

Take a quick glance in any concordance and look up the words "multiply," "multiplied," or "multiplies." This will reveal that our dear God is constantly involved in the wondrous miracle of exponential multiplication. His blessing often involves multiplication. Consider these passages:

- Isaiah 51:2—"Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was but one I called him, *then I blessed him and multiplied him*" (emphasis added).

- Genesis 9:1—“God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “*Be fruitful and multiply*, and fill the earth” (emphasis added).

Certainly the Lord wanted Noah and his descendants to do more than just produce more humans. God used the flood to flush the whole world of hundreds of thousands or possibly millions of violently sinful human beings.⁸ He didn’t want Noah and his company simply to reproduce another evil batch of corrupt people. The Lord hoped the new and succeeding generations would be spiritually holy. He longed for a loving people, sons and daughters who worshipped the Most High God. This has always been his vision for his planet and his created human beings.

- In Genesis 16:10, God promises Hagar, “I will *greatly multiply* your descendants so that they shall be too many to count” (emphasis added).
- Again in Genesis 17:2 God says to Abram, “I will establish my covenant between me and you, and I will *multiply* you exceedingly” (emphasis added).
- In addition to Abram (Abraham), God promised others that he would bless them with the miracle of multiplication. The following is only a partial list of people God said he would bless with multiplication:

Noah—Genesis 9:1, 7

Hagar—Genesis 16:10

Ishmael—Genesis 17:20

Isaac—Genesis 26:24

Jacob (Israel)—Genesis 35:11

Joseph—Genesis 48:16

The Jews—Leviticus 26:9; Deuteronomy 6:3;

7:13; 8:1, 13

David—Jeremiah 33:22

The Levites—Jeremiah 33:22

Look at what else God's says he is willing to multiply to us:

- Our Lord wants to multiply his grace and peace to us—2 Peter 1:2
- God wants to multiply mercy, peace and love to us—Jude 1:2
- God desires his Word to be multiplied in and through us—Acts 12:24
- Our Heavenly Father even wants to multiply our days and years—Proverbs 9:11; Deuteronomy 11:21
- The Lord multiplied his wonders in the land of Egypt—Exodus 11:9
- God can multiply grain, fruit, the fruit of our wombs, herds, flocks, and even our spiritual seed for sowing and for harvest—Ezekiel 36:29-30; Deuteronomy 7:13; 8:13; 2 Corinthians 9:10

Most of our church growth in America is by the blessing of addition. Thank God for every soul he adds to his church, but addition is not God's primary vehicle for saving a lost and dying world. Thank the Lord for any addition growth you see in your life, ministry, or your church, yet addition growth alone will never get the job done. God wants us to bear "much fruit" for his glory. Addition is merely replacement growth.⁹

People are dying and going to hell too fast! Multiplication is God's invention, vision, and design. It's explosive exponential growth. True spiritual multiplication is God's vision for his church to reach a broken, hurting, dying world of lost men, women, boys, and girls.

God's will is that every believer becomes an effective, multiplying disciple-maker of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission of our Lord is "Go therefore and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). This means every Christian—not just the original disciples of Jesus, not just professional missionaries and super-saints, not just pastors and Christian leaders—but every one of us. This is meant for every follower of Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, it is God's stated will, indeed his command, for you to make disciples of Jesus. We must do everything he commanded. That, of course, means making *more disciples* who will also make more disciples of our Lord!

Can dynamic, explosive spiritual multiplication really take place in today's world? Yes! It is happening all over the globe. Consider these examples of churches around the world that are truly multiplying disciple-makers as Jesus told us to:

- A church in Lima, Peru, grew from five thousand to over thirty thousand in four years.
- A church in Kiev, Ukraine, pastored by a Nigerian grew in ten years from eight people to twenty-five thousand disciples of Jesus who are making more disciples of Jesus.
- A church in Bogota, Colombia, has grown from seven hundred to over six hundred thousand in only nineteen years. Some Sundays this church sees over five thousand come to faith in Christ. Their youth group meets in a soccer stadium that they fill twice each Saturday night with over sixty-five thousand young people in attendance.

- A church youth group in the United States grew from four hundred to over twenty-five hundred in just two years.
- A church in the United States planted over eighteen thousand churches worldwide in five years using the principles of spiritual multiplication.
- The largest Nazarene church in the world grew from thirty-one people to between twelve thousand and fourteen thousand in just thirteen years. Their weekly prayer meetings on Wednesdays now run over five thousand people who passionately call on God for souls. This church in Cali, Colombia, held a single rally in the spring of 2010 with over thirty-five thousand in attendance, and over five thousand people gave their hearts to Christ. Unbelievable, but true!

In the next chapter, this book will give you a brief overview of the Cali Nazarene story and its congregations's universal principles.

All these churches use some variation of the most explosive multiplying model of disciple-making the world has ever seen. It is known by various names around the world, but in the Church of the Nazarene we simply call it the Master's Plan.

In summary, here is the Father's vision:

- It is God's will that everybody become a born-again, Spirit-filled believer.
- It is God's will that all believers become witnesses, soul winners, and true Great Commission disciples of Jesus.

- It is God's design that every believer be disciplined for life in a spiritual father/son relationship or a spiritual mother/daughter relationship.
- It is God's will that all believers become spiritual parents. They should consecutively lead others to Jesus and nurture them into full maturity in Christ.
- With God's help, a lot of prayer, and hard work by faithful disciplers, new believers should be trained to become soul winners.

Let's examine the Master's Plan and how God is using it to bring the fulfillment of the Father's vision.