



Sermon Series Notes

“G.P.S.” (Communion Weekend January 2015)

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Early on in my experience as pastor of CCSP, people would schedule meetings with me and ask me what my vision was for the church, sometimes even specifying “What are your five year goals?” I was speechless, and usually came back with an answer something like, “I’m just looking to get through this weekend.” At times I felt pressure to come up with a vision, and a plan to go along with it. I’ve been at this now for over 30 years, and there are still times when I feel pressured to “clearly communicate my vision,” and the plan to “make it happen.”

Now, before I continue, let me say that God does give vision. Without a vision, the people perish (Prov.29:18). But it is a vision that God gives, not that man comes up with.

What is God’s vision for His church? What is God’s vision for CCSP?

Read Storm, pp.22-23

I have always said that I don’t know how to build a church, and I say it again now. But Jesus does, and my challenge is to seek Him and His will so that He can build His church, allowing me to be just one instrument He uses in the process.

I came to Florida in August of 1983. I was invited by the pastor who started this church. I was a “tent maker.” That’s a phrase we get from the apostle Paul, who chose to financially support himself in ministry by making tents, which was his trade. I got a job with Piedmont Airlines at the Tampa airport, and Piedmont supported me as I served the Lord at Calvary Chapel. It was my intention to begin a middle school ministry, but that never happened. For reasons I will not get into, this brand new church plant called Calvary Chapel was going to fold. In meetings with the three other leaders of the church, I shared that I did not feel like that’s what God wanted. Finally in one of our last meetings to discuss the fate of Calvary Chapel, the founding pastor said that if the church was not going to fold, I was the only one left to take over. That was not my plan, it was not my “vision.” But after prayer, and getting counsel from some godly men that I trusted, I felt I should become the pastor. It’s hard to believe that over 30 years later I’m still here.

Years ago Pastor Chuck Smith was in the car with his daughter, and as they drove by Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, she asked her dad if he ever envisioned what the church had become. He shook his head and emphatically said, “Never.” This was after Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa had become the third largest church

in America, and hundreds of other Calvary Chapels had been planted across the country and around the world.

If you were to ask me if I ever envisioned what Calvary Chapel St. Petersburg has become, my answer would be the same as Pastor Chuck's. When God opened the door and called me to become the pastor of this church I was just a young single Christian who wanted to be in a position for God to use me, wherever and however He saw fit. God has done far more in and through this church than I could have asked or imagined. That reminds me of a verse in the Bible:

Eph.3:20 Now to him who is able to do *immeasurably more* than all we *ask* or *imagine*, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

I was in a position where God could use me, but let's understand that it wasn't just me. God put others around me and in the church who were also in a position where He could use them. And He's been doing that for over thirty years now.

So here we are 30 plus years later, in the year 2015. What is God's vision for this local fellowship? There are some things He has laid on my heart, things like building a sports field on site for our sports ministry, building a new ABC room for our children's and preschool ministries, increasing our local outreach efforts, as well as our cross cultural missions ministries. I'm asking the Lord to make our church more racially diverse, and to raise up a host of young leaders that are on fire for God. With that we're making plans to announce a brand new ministry that reaches out to those between the ages of 18-25.

Those are just some of the things the Lord has laid on my heart. But I'm certain there are things the Lord has planned that are beyond what any of us could ask or imagine. That's what God always wants to do. But in order to do so God uses people.

My main text is Eph.4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, *as each part does its work*.

What's your part? I have three points, and they just happen to form an acronym: GPS.

To help remember this message just think "GPS." These three points are not exhaustive of our responsibilities as Christians, but they are essential in building up the church.

G - GIVE

- Parable of talents; Matthew 25:27... you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.
- The church needs money to operate; I Cor.9:5-6, 14; I Tim.5:9, 17;
- Prov.3:9 Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your increase.
- The tithe; Abraham (Gen.14); Hebrews 7; Jacob (Gen.28)
- II Chron.31:5...the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, *a tithe* of everything.
- Off gross not net
- Beyond the tithe
- Giving will not only honor the Lord, it will bless you personally; Matt.6:19-20; II Cor.9:10-11; Malachi 3:10

- Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
- Illus: potato chip bag.

P - PRAY

- Personally

- Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15-16
- Jer.33:3; John 14:12-14; 15:7-8; 16:24
- The apostle Paul was always asking the church to pray for him (Rom.15:30-32; II Cor.1:10-11; Eph.6:19-20; Col.4:2-4; I Thess.5:25; II Thess.3:1-2); If I am not on your prayer list, put me on it in 2015. And I can tell you how you can begin praying right away. Wendy and I, along with our missions pastor Art Dykstra, will be in Cuba this next week from Monday til Friday, leading a prayer summit with over 500 Cuban pastors. We're also taking John Streeter from our fellowship, and he's gonna set up wireless internet for the church we've been supporting there. Pray for safe travel, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to fall upon our meeting with these pastors, for our team to stay healthy, for a fresh anointing on Daniel & myself as we lead the prayer summit, and anything else God puts on your heart.

- Corporately

- Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.
- Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
- Acts 3:1ff; 4:23-31; 13:2-3; 16:13ff, 25ff
- **Our** father who art in heaven...
- God did give Jim Cymbala a vision for the Brooklyn Tabernacle. You know what it was? Read from Fresh Wind Fresh Fire, pp.27-28.
- We have taken steps over the past few years to make prayer more of a priority as a church. We want to become a praying church, not just a church that prays. "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Our staff is broken up into small groups & at certain times throughout the work week each group stops whatever they are doing and they pray. Our men on staff are each a part of a small group that prays every Tuesday morning from 8:30-9:00. Every Sunday morning some of our elders, along with other men in our church meet and pray. We took our leadership away in 2013 for two days and did nothing but pray, worship the Lord, and read Scripture. This past year we did the same thing with over 100 members of our congregation. We have devoted the first Wednesday service of every month to prayer and worship. What is surprising to me is that numbers have dwindled at any meeting where the emphasis is prayer. That is a shame, but we will not detour from the course that has been set. If anything, we will increase the emphasis. God did great things through Gideon and 300. God did great things through 120 who joined together constantly in prayer (Acts 1). "The few can secure blessings for the many" (Al Toledo).
- II Chron.7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
- When do you get together with other believers in the church and pray?

- “Thirty minutes of Spirit-aided intercessory prayer is more effective than all the new programs and stylistic changes we are constantly tinkering with. Human ingenuity can’t be compared to God’s power.” (Cymbala, Storm, pp.137-38)
- Requirements for prayer to be powerful and effective
 - Discipline (I Peter 3:7; Col.4:12; Francis Chan at Passion on prayer; Journaling).
 - Fervency (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8)
 - Righteousness (James 5:16b; I Peter 3:7; I John 3:21-22; Psalm 66:18)

S - SERVE

- Gal.5:13...serve one another in love.
- Go over various ministries that people can serve in (Ministry Directory)
- Life Groups are small groups that meet in homes. These groups are not intended to be Bible studies, but rather groups where fellowship happens (Acts 2:42). Through growing in fellowship, people should be looking for practical ways to serve one another. I realize that not everyone who attends a life group experiences genuine fellowship (Letter from Mrs. Bates). I’m sorry if you are not experiencing real fellowship in whatever group you are a part of. With that said, a word of advice: Don’t wait for someone to reach out to you, Pray and look for opportunities to reach out to others. The best way to find a friend is to be a friend.
- “Community starts in small groups.” There are life group representative in the lobby at The Ministry Counter, so stop by and check out where there is a life group nearest to where you live;

CONCLUSION

- **One night I had a wondrous dream, One set of footprints there was seen, the footprints of my precious Lord, but mine were not along the shore. But then some stranger prints appeared, and I asked the Lord, What have we here? Those prints are large and round and neat, but Lord they are too big for feet. My child, He said in somber tones, for miles I carried you alone. I challenged you to walk in faith, but you refused and made me wait. You disobeyed, you would not grow, The walk of faith, you would not know. So I got tired, I got fed up, and there I dropped you on your butt. Because in life, there comes a time, when one must fight, and one must climb, when one must rise and take a stand, or leave their butt prints in the sand.**
- Will you begin to obey Prov.3:9 this year? Give to the Lord through the church. It’s the least you can do.
- Will you develop a daily prayer life? Perhaps try journaling your prayers? Will you get together with other believers regularly & pray? Will you join us the first Wednesday of each month to pray?
- Will you find a place where you can serve?