

Casting Vision - for Vision Sundays

Why a Vision Sunday?

I am often asked about what we do on our Vision Sundays, and I thought it might be helpful to do a series of postings on the subject. I will first outline my thoughts on what I believe makes a good vision talk, and give a number of examples from the last 5 years of such talks at King's; I hope this will give you some ideas for your own future Vision talks.

We always have a Vision Sunday at the beginning of Sept (but this could be October if you are a student church) and again in January. These fit well into the natural flow of church life - post summer, new term, and of course in the New Year, people are already readjusting their lives post summer holidays or after Christmas. It is an important occasion to re-engage them with the church's vision.

I normally start a vision talk with a personal story from my holiday break – usually something humorous! I think it helps people to connect with the visionary as well as the vision - people tend to 'buy into' a person first and a vision second. I remind the church why we have a Vision Sunday twice a year,

- firstly and primarily, to give thanks to God for His faithfulness over the last few months and years,
- secondly, to keep us focussed on what God has called us to do, and
- thirdly, to inform those who are new, helping them to understand our journey to this point.

Beyond hearing our story we hope it will help them to join us or to step in further.

Don't forget that the best vision talk looks back and celebrates what has been achieved as much as it looks forward to all that lies ahead.

Putting together a Vision Sunday talk

These are some of the key principles which go through my mind as I prepare a vision talk.

- Root the talk in scripture, a biblical value, or narrative.
- Connect our story with God's story
- Reflect back, tell stories, declare victories, face facts, and explain any delay or failure
- Celebrate God's faithfulness
- Present the next step of the journey with faith. If you have achieved any momentum this helps. Remember that past performance is the best indicator for future performance. Outline in detail plans for next stage or year.
- Invite everyone to join in the next step - please increase your giving, please move to another site, please step up and serve, please join a small group, please come to the prayer meeting... etc
- Make a special appeal to new people to join, sign up, to help us fulfil our God-given task and vision.

I hope the vision talk outlines below will inspire you, so that you can inspire the people of God!

Preparing for 40 days

This is the first of a series of outlines of vision talks I have preached – this one from January 2011

Acts 1:1-8. Jesus tells the disciples to await the promised Holy Spirit. As we prepare to launch into multi-site, elders decided to have 40 Days of prayer and fasting – going deeper into God before making a major reach.

Overview of preaching series in Acts 1 to 13 taking place over next 7 weeks to back up '40 Days'. Encourage fasting on Wednesdays to coincide with prayer celebrations in evening. (Explain different levels/types of fasting). Distribute home-produced but extremely professional 40 Days booklets – includes Bible study notes and prayer topics as well as FAQs re multi-site.

Outline need for 100 further volunteers to cover multi-site arrangements at end of 40 Days. Need to maintain revenue giving and rise to challenge of giving to multi-site as an extra. Everyone to receive a letter from me with all the details of what we will need and asking them to prayerfully review their giving.

Talk about the arrival of Lawrence and Mary, the first black African family in the church 14 years ago. Interview: Lawrence – 'I want to be behind the new thing God is doing. We live only once!' Mary – 'I want to look back in 10 or 20 years and say – I was involved in starting that. We are building for future generations, too.' Explain that to maintain the diversity balance we need 20 from the black community to go to Lee with Phil Varley and Robert Kwami. Ask them to step up.

Time to Advance

Outline of vision talk given in Sept 2010

Personal info: sabbatical, writing the book

Church: completion of purchase of new building happened in sabbatical. Look back – give thanks to God. Look forward – Joshua's amazing encounter with God before the battle for Jericho (Bible reading). Story of King's rooted in such an encounter – 4 weeks into my ministry here visit of Vineyard prophetic team. Discovered in the history of the church – founded by a protégée of C H Spurgeon with a vision for a church of 1000 members. We advance like Joshua and the people of God – a mixture of fear, uncertainty and excitement.

New developments: Catford, Downham and Lee sites. Explained new future leadership structure to cover sites. Asked for volunteers to go and help support these leaders in their work. Initially helping to set up and prepare.

Walls that we face: people challenge – volunteers needed to serve, financial challenge – core of established givers, newer arrivals slower to sign up for regular giving. Please step up.

Join us in commitment to meeting with God as we step forward, to see the church advance and many others won for Christ.

20/20 Vision

Outline of vision talk given in January 2010

Tours of new Lee building – one response, ‘You have seriously undersold the building, Steve!’ Primary purpose today – giving thanks to God for what He has done.

Look back – look forward. 20/20 vision – definition: perfect understanding or appreciation of what has already been seen.

1 Thess. 1:7 – ‘...you became a model to all the believers and the message went out.’ Chance to impact a city and model something to other churches in the UK – we are watched by them. If we can go from 200 to 1000 it will give them added faith for their own situation. The important thing is that the message goes out!

Résumé of church journey over last 15 years given. In last 10 years 500 have joined us. Mark event by getting congregation to light 500 tea-lights on tables around the auditorium – each one representing a transformed life.

Interview: Shirley J – joined in Jan 95 – gives her highlights of the decade (new auditorium in 2000, ‘gracism’ series and the changes brought by that, expansion of youth ministry) and her hopes for the future (becoming a huge church; multiple meetings at Lee; growth in maturity and unity as well as size; healings, signs and wonders).

Experience of asking the banks for loans – wanted to know our history. ‘When looking at the future, the best indicator of future trend is past performance.’ For us the past is counted in tens, the future in hundreds and thousands. Want an increase in diversity (culture, class and age), growth in our mercy ministry, sending out more leaders to plant/resource other churches, creativity – books, albums and teaching material.

We need your prayers, your pledges for finances and we need you - to step up and volunteer to be an active participant in the great task before us, for the glory of God.

Nehemiah’s Task

Outline of vision talk given in Sept 09

Highlights of summer holiday and study leave in context of new building project. Nehemiah’s building project! Neh. 1 and 2. Video clip: tallest wave surfed! To do that needed preparation and courage – events move at speed. There’s a potential cost – Nehemiah’s life was on the line in the royal court setting – he began his request with a great prayer – he was God focused - reminded God of His promises. (For us 10 years ago – a prophecy that we would gather 2000.)

Review of last year: grown faster than ever.

Attending - 780 in 2008, 1000+ in 2009 - on the same Sunday.

Welcome desk – 122 LTKM forms given in Jan – Aug 2008, 230 Jan – Aug 2009.

Crunch moment – collision of needs between team/buildings/finance! Show artist’s impression of new refurbished facility at Lee. Visited USA to see examples of multi-site – an urban church phenomenon arising from a situation where the limiting factor is facilities. Multi-site gives the chance for growth. Remain one church, one leadership, one identity. We need to strengthen the team – through year team members, internships, taking on Robert Kwami to join the Pastoral team as well as Malcolm & Cathy Kyte (Malcolm will oversee the Pastoral team) - all coming to help us build a church of 2000.

Letters coming from me to each of you re our giving. We need to give £750K for the next 3 years and £375K for the following six months – above our current giving levels. Ask some to consider a double title – 20% before tax – something I am already doing. Pledge Days coming up in October. Please give – and please pray! Currently amazing momentum – behind all the figures, the figure of God at work, reaching out to the lost – for His Glory!

Partners! Come and help!

Outline of vision talk given in January 09

Tibbert Christmas news. Personal: each Christmas and summer holiday I do a personal/family review – cover marriage, spiritual disciplines, how the kids are doing, physical health, emotional state, finances. For this last point – I have a 25 year plan. I have one life and I want to 'max it' for God.

On Vision Sunday I do a similar review for the church – possible to set the bar too high so that such a review and analysis demotivates. Also possible to set the bar too low and underachieve.

Lk. 5:1-7 Jesus' miracle leads to the call – 'Partners – come and help!'

Since Jan 07 we have experienced a Big Catch! Jan 08 I put before you the five challenges that could have sunk our boat

- Diversity – not remaining a monoculture church
- Growth – caring for people in small groups and providing enough leaders
- Facilities – looking at relocation - quote for £12 million was beyond us. Need for further office space.
- Finance – growth requires large financial demands
- Apostolic – recovering from church plant into Beacon (40 people sent), 10 people to Greenwich, a further 10 to Beacon. My role in Newfrontiers expanding, Mick Taylor's involvement in Newfrontiers' training – a huge gift that benefits us and the wider movement.

Response to the challenges: Gracism series, move to a third meeting. Review how we have met our goals from 2007. Growth in our numbers could be described as 'a massive catch' – be encouraged! Recognise parts of our set-up are overstretched, though we have massive momentum. I don't want us to sink –going to need partners to come and help us! Elders to discuss launch of a 4th meeting – possibly on another site – please pray for us.

Lk 5:7 = key. Signalled to partners to help – or they would sink. Went to those nearest – if you are here we don't want you to just be here for the (boat) ride – come and help on this battleship, not a pleasure cruiser.

5 ways to help – step up in

- leadership – come and carry some weight.
- membership – sign of commitment
- serving – don't assume that everyone else will do the necessary tasks
- praying – especially collective prayer meetings
- giving – aware of current economic situation but prime way to show where your heart is – by tithes and offerings.

Conclusion: 'Partners! Come and help!'

Finally: A Vision Health Warning!

Vision is a powerful leadership tool - but it should come with a health warning. It needs to be handled with wisdom and it requires stamina!

Vision, and clearly expressing that vision repeatedly, is a vital component in keeping the church moving forward.

At King's we define vision as **what God has called us to do**. It needs to be God-inspired - as it says in Proverbs 29:18, 'without vision the people perish'.

Vision is different to goals - effective goals have a set time line for achieving them, while vision is about the 'big picture' and is something which is humanly speaking beyond your reach! A wise visionary leader will have a sober assessment of his own call, gifting and context before describing a preferred picture of the future to any hearers.

On these grounds a series on vision needs to come with a health warning. A God-inspired vision needs a team, a plan and finance to fulfil it - or very quickly the credibility of the vision and the visionary will be brought in to question. As I read recently,

- *Vision without action is merely a dream*
- *Action without vision passes the time*
- *Vision and action can change the world*

A clearly articulated vision can bring momentum, direction and purpose. In my experience God's people are generous givers; they just need a vision which is worth giving to!

A clear vision can help you to say 'no' as well as 'yes' at critical moments. It can help you stay the distance and fulfil the call of God on your life - and that of your church.

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March 2012

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