

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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A Positive Vision To Change Your World

by Dan Trygg

"Now these are the numbers ...equipped for war, who came to David..., to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of Yahweh. ...of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do..." I Chron. 12:23,32

"For this reason, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the true-knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord, unto everything pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the true-knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the authority of the darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Col. 1:9-14

"Now Yahweh said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' ...And Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him..."

Gen. 12:1-4

In Proverbs 29:18, Solomon observes that "where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained..." **Unless we understand *who we are*, what we are *about*, and that *there is a purpose that is higher than our own immediate self-comfort*, we will not be motivated to *discipline ourselves* to grow, nor will we be able to *rally ourselves* as a "fighting force" for Christ, as the sons of Issachar did for the cause of King David. It is just a reality of our human nature that **our motivation for action is dependent on our *awareness of need or expectation of benefit***. The first requirement in raising an army is *recruiting the troops* and *convincing them of the need to train and make ready for war*. Part of our earthly experience indicates that **we tend to continue in what is comfortable, and go on in the path of least resistance**, unless motivated by a higher or more urgent need for change.**

Often in life, we are motivated by fear or pain to make changes. These are not the highest or best motivators, however. They are not sufficient to rally people to a cause that goes beyond the immediate boundaries of their own lives. *We react* to fear. *We react* to pain. **They may incite us to change, but neither of these motivators call out the most noble parts of our being to reach beyond ourselves.** These are self-protective, self-preserving motivations that drive us to make uncomfortable choices in order to avoid still more uncomfortable consequences. **Generally, these will motivate only the *minimal effort* required to stave off the threat.** They do not motivate true devotion, because when the immediate threat is allayed, or forgotten, the tendency is to shrink back into what is "normal", or comfortable to self. **Nor do they generally motivate *self-sacrifice*, because self-preservation is at the core of fear and pain as motivators.** When the threshold of pain becomes too intense, the tendency will be to retreat, because there is no longer a motivation present that is stronger than the price of the pain being experienced. In the case of both fear or pain, **the response is more of a "have to" response than a "want to" choice.** If the danger or the pain is removed from pressing on my life, I would not be motivated to continue in pursuit. The motivation is not based in something *outside of myself*; my *self-interest is the driving cause for change*. **Legalism tends to rely upon fear or the pain of guilt for adherence to its rules.** Once fear or guilt are temporarily assuaged in some fashion, there remains no motivation to continue in the performance of the rules, and the behavior slips to the point where fear or guilt prod one again into action. **Legalism is a roller coaster ride between fear and forgetfulness**, because the rules themselves cannot truly capture the devotion of the heart. The heart is ultimately made for God alone.

A positive vision is a far better motivator than fear or pain. A positive vision captures the imagination and fires the spirit to devote one's energies to a beneficial end, especially an end that reaches beyond oneself. **A positive vision rallies all that is best within the human heart** to commit oneself to a person or cause worth supporting. **There is a "want to" impetus to this kind of motivation.** Since the vision is for a better result, the cause continues to motivate us as long as we *want* something better to come into fruition, ...and something in us *always* wants what is better. Furthermore, since the cause is *outside of myself*, **it continues to incite my motivation and my dedication even if my personal life becomes comfortable and prosperous.** It is not about *my* immediate personal comfort anymore, it is about the cause or vision which is beyond the scope of just my personal existence. **The more clearly convinced I am of the *value* and *urgency* of the vision, the more completely devoted I become to its fulfillment**, and the more I am willing to dedicate my time, efforts and resources to its accomplishment. I do this because I *want* to, ...not because I am being forced, guilted, or coerced.

Like a father, **God will use the entire range of motivators to move us toward what is beneficial.** God came to people throughout human history with *both* kinds of motivators, negative and positive. In order to stave

off a crisis, or to motivate an immediate response in behavior, He *will* use pain and fear. He *will* discipline with a rod, bringing severe consequences against sinful behavior in order to motivate change. **He knows, however, that we will never have a *mature relationship to Him*, and we will never *fulfill our potential*, unless He is able to instill in us a positive vision, like His own.**

Throughout history, God has continually come to His people with a positive vision, something to live for, not simply something to avoid.

With Abram, it was the seven-fold promise of blessing that would reach *way beyond the boundaries of his life* to touch "all the families of the earth" with blessing. It was *not enough to leave* the land of his fathers, even if he had *wanted* to leave. Abram needed something to live *for*, something that would draw out the deeper aspects of his character and would motivate him to seek Yahweh. Because of this promise, we see that *not only* did Abram *leave his old life behind*, but *he also began to devote himself to Yahweh*, building altars to worship Him and calling upon His name (Gen. 12:8).

With the children of Israel, it was *not enough to get freedom from slavery* in Egypt, *God gave them the hope of a new land, and a new life*, as His people. *He offered them many blessings for their obedience*, and *warned them of the painful consequences of disobedience*. Again, God desired to use them to inspire and bless the nations of the world (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). The vision was to have a world-wide impact of blessing! Those who saw His greatness and His goodness were motivated by *trust* (faith) and *love* to acknowledge God in their day to day lives, and to draw close to Him. For them, the law was a guideline for developing a relationship with God, and they embraced it as a way to enable them to know Him better, and to honor Him. Others, who did *not* have a positive vision, were motivated only by fear, obligation, or tradition. To them, the Law became a burden which they resented, ritual performance which was hollow and empty. With each succeeding generation, the problem of motivation to live for God came down to whether or not people retained or grasped who God really was, or whether they forgot Him (Deut. 8:11-20; Jg. 2:10f). *Without a vision, the people became unrestrained, and they went after their fleshly appetites and comforts.*

Without a noble aspiration, we quickly degenerate to living for selfish creature-comforts, and God did not make us for that. That is not "all there is". That is not our destiny. That is *not* "what life is all about". We need a higher target, a focus that captures our imagination, that inspires us to step beyond the immediate, visible limits of our experience. That is exactly what Jesus did, when He began preaching. He was calling people to reexamine their perspective of reality. **Jesus was telling people that there was more to life than what they were living for. He proclaimed that the Kingdom of God that had come to begin liberating the oppression and darkness of this world system.** He came to set people free! He gathered followers and called people to join up. He demonstrated the power of this Kingdom by virtue of the healings and deliverances which God gave Him to perform, ...and He trained others to do as He did. He said things like, "Don't go to sleep. Wake up! Be watchful! Be ready! Be on the alert!" to warn of the danger of complacency, of being lulled to sleep by losing one's focus and giving in to mere creature-comforts. **You cannot read the Gospels without catching the sense of mission and purpose which pervades Jesus' actions and teachings.** His last directive was to "disciple *all the nations*"! This was a world-wide objective! He placed this commandment in the hands of those He had specifically trained to "catch people" (Matt. 4:19; Lk. 5:10; Mk. 3:13-15). They, in turn, employed His methods and proclaimed His vision by equipping *all* the followers of the Way to *do* ministry. **There is no doubt that the early Christians clearly knew that they were part of a much larger vision. This sense of call, purpose and destiny motivated them to "devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the sharing, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" in order to become more equipped and built up to take their place in the Lord's strike force, the church** (Matt. 16:18,19). *They had a job to do, and they knew it! They were at war, and they knew it!* This "higher calling" motivated them to "lay aside the old man..., be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man" (Eph. 4:22-24). They could not be effective if they did not.

The apostle Paul also appealed to the higher motivations of our hearts. Without a doubt, he understood that we needed something to live *for*. It was not enough to simply stop sinning. **He set us firmly on the path of discovery, adventure and usefulness.** In Eph. 1, he prays that we might know what God has made available to us, the hope of our calling, the inheritance, and the power that are ours in Christ, ...*strong* word pictures that capture our imaginations. In Col. 1, he prays that we might come to be filled with a true-knowledge of God's will, so that we might walk worthy of Him who has delivered us from the authority of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His Son. **We have been set free from darkness, but we have been set in His Kingdom to do His will, and to bear fruit for His glory, ...to know Him intimately, so that we might display His love and proclaim His heart accurately. God wants to use you to bless others, to initiate changes that will reach around the world. Do you believe it? Are you willing to press in closer, ...to go deeper and farther? Are you willing to order your life to discover and fulfill the positive vision God has for you?**