

Momentum: Getting to the Finish Line, part 4

What is Your "Life Picture?"

Psalm 122

- I. As we continue our series on Momentum, we are ready to add another word to our list of keywords.
 - a. We started with *Devotion*, then added *Growth* and *Together*.
 - i. Today we're adding the word *Vision*.
 - ii. We want to take a look today at "God's preferred future."
 - iii. We've reached the part of the race called the bell lap.
 1. It's the last lap before the finish.
 2. The goal is in sight and we're within reach of it.
 3. We just have to stay focused and finish strong.
 - b. We live in a world where change is a constant; an increasingly fast constant.
 - i. The internet, cell phones, e-mail, notebooks, PDA's, Thumb drives, digital cameras.
 - ii. These things weren't even around a decade or more ago; now we wonder what we ever did without them.
 - iii. In an environment where things change so quickly there are two realities we better face.
 1. First, if we don't keep up we're going to get left behind. (irrelevant)
 2. Second, we better have something stable to hang on to when the winds of change start really blowing!
 - c. That "something" to hold onto is vision – God's preferred future.
 - i. Hebrews 11:1-2 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for."
 - ii. By definition, a vision is something out there, in the future, not completely solid.
 1. It can become clearer, but it will always be as much a future reality as a present one.
 2. One thing we can be sure of is that vision has power!
 - iii. As Israel continued its ascent toward the temple singing songs of praise in anticipation of worship, they looked forward {ahead} to what was to come.
 1. Psalm 122:2 – "our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem."
 2. Well, not quite yet; but that was the power of the vision.
 - d. Not too long ago, as a church, we went through a process of visioning that proved to be very helpful to our family – and continues to be.
 - i. Today I want to talk about some of the steps in that process.
 - ii. And then I'd like to see how we can apply what we learned as a body to our lives as individual followers of Jesus. {apprentices}
- II. Here are six steps that are the building blocks of vision.
 - a. The first step is forming vision.
 - i. Vision is formed when you spend time looking at the destination.
 1. "Are we there yet?"
 2. I could make it because I had a picture of my grandparents cabin in my head.
 - ii. Psalm 122:1 – "Let us go to the house of the Lord."
 1. But they were not there yet!

2. The image that they kept in their minds was, “Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem.” {Psalm 122:2}
- iii. APPLICATION: What is the image (the vision) of your destination?
 1. Do you have a picture, a life picture, of what God’s calling on your life is?
 2. It may be as simple as “becoming more like Christ,” or “being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.”
 3. But you have to have a life picture; without one, you can’t keep your eye on the prize – because you don’t know what the prize is.
- b. Next is refining vision.
 - i. Once you have a life picture, the next step is to continually refine that picture.
 1. You might get a glimpse of where God wants you and what God wants you to do.
 2. Now you have to start making plans to get there.
 - ii. God gave Joshua a life picture – a call and challenge to lead God’s people.
 1. Joshua 1:2-3 – “²Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. ³I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.”
 2. A short snapshot of what the vision for Joshua’s ministry would be.
 - iii. APPLICATION: Narrowing the focus of your life picture.
 1. It’s great to say, “I want to become more like Christ.” – Now, how are you going to do that?
 2. “I’m going to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.” -- What’s that look like?
 3. There are many ways to be a faithful follower of Jesus. Which specific path will you follow?
 - a. You can’t borrow vision – it has to be yours.
 - b. You can’t live someone else’s life picture.
 - c. What will your journey look like?
- c. The third step is growing vision.
 - i. Now your vision needs to grow.
 1. Vision doesn’t just happen, by the power of God you make it happen.
 - a. There are some things you need to do.
 - b. I’ve talk to people who have great “life pictures”, but they’ve never panned out.
 2. I discover that they’ve been waiting for God to do something.
 - a. And God’s been waiting for them to do something!
 - b. Vision isn’t passive, it needs to grow and persevere, even in the face of trials.
 - ii. After God gave Joshua that life picture, he went on to give him a more detailed snapshot of the vision.
 1. Joshua 1:4 – “⁴Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west.
 2. This set Joshua up for a task that helped develop his life picture.
 - a. It began with a vision – Joshua is called to succeed Moses.
 - b. That vision got refined – “get ready to cross the river Jordan.”

- c. And that vision grew – “Here’s what you’ll do to claim your territory on the other side of the Jordan.”
 - iii. APPLICATION: It’s time for a walk through.
 - 1. You’ve got your vision; it’s even been refined and made more specific. Now ...
 - 2. What are the steps that will get me from where I am to where I want to be?
 - 3. What do you need to do to “fill in” your life picture? {Vision must lead to doing}.
 - a. What habits do you need to develop?
 - b. What skills do you need to acquire?
 - c. What weaknesses do you need to harness?
 - d. Who do you need to come with you?
 - d. Fourth, is sustaining vision.
 - i. Vision lasts. Your life picture should last.
 - 1. It you can accomplish it in a day – it wasn’t a good vision.
 - 2. Your vision should have staying power.
 - ii. After God gave Joshua the vision, obstacles and problems arose. Things started getting in the way of the vision.
 - 1. But God’s promise to Joshua was a done deal.
 - a. Joshua 1:5-7 – ⁵“No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. ⁷ Be strong and very courageous.”
 - b. All Joshua had to do was to keep on with what God had given him.
 - i. The resistance he would face couldn’t diminish the vision.
 - ii. The abundant he may experience should distract him from the vision.
 - 2. Your life picture is given by God – it’s a done deal.
 - a. You have to step forward and grow into it and persevere.
 - b. Don’t settle for anything less than the realization of your life picture – your vision.
 - iii. APPLICATION: Too many followers of Christ leave their vision behind when they meet opposition or resistance.
 - 1. And because they don’t persevere, they don’t experience the promise of God in their lives.
 - a. They end up starting over again at the beginning.
 - b. You will never reach the end of the race if you keep starting over.
 - 2. Will you have staying power? Will you go the distance?
 - a. Will you fade in the final lap of the race?
 - b. Or will you get a second wind and finish strong because you have a clear life picture {vision} of the finish line.
- e. Fifth, articulating vision.
 - i. Our words have power.
 - 1. Words create reality.

- a. One of the things that makes human beings unique among God's creation is language.
 - b. We sing of faith and victory. We speak of power and might. We know that words have power.
 - 2. Our words fortify our trust in God and in God's promises.
 - a. When we sing, "Your Love O Lord is higher than the heavens," we are confessing our faith in a mighty God.
 - b. When we pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done," we are expressing our reliance and dependence on God.
 - ii. Vision is something you talk about –
 - 1. To yourself, to your brothers and sisters, to anyone who will listen.
 - 2. Vision is contagious.
 - a. Sharing it gets you excited.
 - b. Sharing it gets others excited.
 - 3. When you share it (tell it) it gets burned into your brain, and into your life, and into your way of living and being.
 - iii. APPLICATION: Who knows about my vision? Who have I shared it with?
 - 1. Does your wife/husband know your "life picture?" {Are they in it?}
 - 2. Do you know it – can you express it – is it right on the tip of your tongue?
 - 3. If not, who is the first person you're going to share it with?
 - f. Sixth and finally, acting on vision.
 - i. Now that you have a vision, act on vision.
 - 1. Getting the vision is similar to getting the directions you need from Mapquest.
 - 2. Acting on vision is taking the Mapquest directions with you when you leave on your trip.
 - ii. Vision becomes the guide that helps you navigate through your decisions each day.
 - 1. You begin with the end in mind.
 - 2. You plan the race and you run the plan.
 - iii. You know where the turns are.
 - 1. You know what to say "yes" to.
 - 2. You know what to say "no" to.
 - 3. You make those decisions by knowing the vision {having a life picture} and acting on that vision.
 - g. Forming vision, refining vision, growing vision, sustaining vision, articulating vision, acting on vision.
- III. Will this really work for you? {*Yes. Because I know it worked for me and I know it worked for our church*}
 - a. When we began 40 Days of Purpose two years ago, we were forming vision.
 - i. We weren't starting from scratch but we were starting very near the beginning.
 - 1. We began with the phrase "Building the family of Christ."
 - 2. And we worked from there.
 - ii. We refined that vision over the course of some time and developed a mission statement that talked about specific ways to make that vision a reality.
 - 1. Those revisions are summarized in the phrase "Loving God; loving others; making disciples."

2. We had a pretty clear life picture for our church – but we didn't stop there.
 - iii. That vision deliberately grew as we pull the people and the resources around us that we needed to move forward.
 1. Last winter we formed assessment groups that looked at all areas of our church life and formulated goals.
 2. We've encountered bumps and detours on the way to reaching those goals, but they're still good goals. We're persevering on our way to them.
 - iv. I think we've sustained momentum over that time by lifting the vision before our church body over and over again.
 1. We're not backing away from our commitment to that vision.
 2. We're on track and still convinced that this is the vision God has called us to.
 - v. We're articulating that vision every chance we get.
 1. We know that constant reminders will mean constant improvement in the clarity of the vision.
 2. We're making it hard to miss the vision.
 - vi. And more and more we're acting on the vision.
 1. If this is our vision ... then this is what we do.
 2. We're living into our vision so that we can live out our vision.
 - b. That process isn't unique to our church.
 - i. It works the same way for you
 1. Form a vision; refine it until its crystal clear.
 2. Let it percolate and grow so that it consumes you and becomes a part of you.
 3. And then run the race: sustained, clear direction over time.
 4. That's back up by both your words and your actions.
 - ii. Why are you here?
 1. What specifically does that mean to you?
 2. Let it consume you – completely.
 3. And then go – commit to it, live through it, stick to it.
 4. Talk about it, share it and do it!