



“How to Climb The Generosity Ladder”
 Acts 2:37-41 & Matt. 6:19-21
 January 18, 2015

THE WHAT: Our Call - Vision 2020:

The End Result of Vision 2020 – Transformed Lives -
We desire to be radically transformed by God into a people He can use to transform others.

- ✓ **Connect** Yourself & Others to Christ and the Church
- ✓ **Grow** In a Deepening Relationship with Christ
- ✓ **Commit** Your Time and Resources to Serve Christ & Others
- ✓ **Go** Share the Love of Christ With Everyone Everywhere

THE WHO: Us – Petal FBC – A Transformed Church

- ✓ There Was Connecting to the Lord and to the Church
- ✓ There Was Growth Taking Place – Both Spiritual and Numerical
- ✓ There Was Commitment Happening – *They Were Serving and They Were Giving.*
- ✓ They Were Going and Telling Others

THE HOW: Unrestrained Generosity

The Generosity Ladder

Encouraging Everyone to take the next step up the Generosity Ladder towards our Vision 2020 Ministry Plan Giving.

THE WHERE: Everyone Participating

Everyone Serving on One of the 4 Teams

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Connect Team | Commit Team |
| Grow Team | Go Team |

THE GENEROSITY LADDER



Our Response:

- ✓ Would you commit your heart and life to Jesus Christ?
- ✓ Would you step forward and be baptized?
- ✓ Would you join this Church Family?
- ✓ For Vision 2020 Would you...
 - Commit to pray for the next 40 Days
 - Pray about your financial commitment?
 - Pray about how you will participate?

UNRESTRAINED GENEROSITY

“How to Climb the Generosity Ladder”

Acts 2:37-47 & Matthew 6:19-21

January 18, 2015 AM Service

I'm so glad you are here as together we are the beginning of a journey that will take us through the next 6 weeks that will help take us through the next 5 years, to get us to the next decade. We are praying that the Lord will do a new thing in us and in our Church just as He did in the book of Acts. They built off the foundation that was there and we will do the same and then launched into new territory as they depended on the Lord and sacrificed and surrendered their lives and our prayer is that we would do the same.

THE WHAT: Our Call - Vision 2020

The What If - Vision 2020

An ambitious and God-sized plan that dreams of what could we do and what impact could we have if we truly engaged all our people in the mission of impacting our city, state, nation, and the ends of the earth. We started to ask questions like: What if we engaged more of these members who have gotten disconnected? What if we saw more people connected to LifeGroups? What if we got to a place where our LifeGroups were multiplying by constantly growing to the point of creating new groups? What if more people were deeply growing in the relationship with the Lord personally and then corporately as a Church? What if people were deeply connecting with others in accountability relationships? What if more people knew their SHAPE and were committed to plugging into a ministry in service? What if all our people were engaged in some kind of mission opportunity every single year? What if our people were equipped to share their faith and actually did so? What if we were deeply impacting Petal in a strategic way to meet the needs of those in our community so they could find Christ? What if we took the call to help plant ministry points and even churches here in Petal, to help do that in MS, North America and even to the ends of the earth? (UUPG – we are committed to stay until there is a sustained church planting movement) What if we partnered with other organizations and churches to do just that? What if we were able to complete much-needed space, parking, and other needs on our campus?

What if... and there are more.

We deeply believe the Lord is calling us to do more than ever in our history. So as we begin to unfold even just a little bit this morning a Plan, Vision 2020 – a Plan that will take us to our Church to the year 2020 in a strategic way that will allow our Church to be prepared for the growth that we are praying will continue, to challenge our membership to step up in ways that they never have before & follow a clear plan that lays this out.

Let me clearly say, as we looked back in our State of the Church Message where we stopped and paused and thanked God for all He has done. In the last 3 years the Lord has added 242 members bringing us to a total membership of over 650, we have seen our Worship attendance grow by 123%, our LifeGroups by 157%. We have seen our giving increase by over 58%. We have been able to complete some of our unfinished spaces in our building that we desperately needed. But most importantly, out of those 242 new members, 86 of those were by Baptism meaning we have seen people's lives being transformed including our own lives over these past 3 years! We have begun to impact our own city, gone on Mission here in MS, headed on Mission in North America and even gone to the ends of earth with plans to go much further! We again just stop and rejoice and say the Lord is good, His love endures forever, He has done far more than we could have ever imagined.

But as we look at our community we find that at best on any given Sunday there are no more than 5,000 people in Church on a Sunday here in Petal leaving 70 % or over 13,000 people who are not churched! There are tons of needs in our community that are not being met and people who do not have a relationship with Christ much less a Church. Even taking a look in our own Church, our average Worship Attendance in 2014 was 290 people which mean only 42% of our resident members on average attended church – not even half. We looked at what are the *obstacles inside the Church* that with the Lord's help we would need to overcome and address – things like **Spiritual Apathy, Complacency, and Biblical Illiteracy, Making sure we stay simply and focused on the main thing, Our Lack of Space** (Parking & Traffic Flow, LifeGroup (Classrooms) Space, Student Ministry Space) **Fear of change** – comfort zone, **Finances** Financial Growth – new members beginning to give Finance/Debt, **Need for More**

Volunteers, New Member Assimilation, Adding Staff, Overcoming Small Church Mentality, Evangelism

ILLUS: Stats from LifeWay Article

Obstacles in our Culture - Look at the Stats in Our Country that people right here in Petal think too.

We are not winning the war and some would just give up and quit, stick our head in the sand and say there is nothing that we can do or even worse come to the place where we really don't care.

That is not the church I believe He is calling us to be and I don't believe that's the kind of Church that you won't to be a part of – one that does nothing, doesn't impact it's city, doesn't see lives transformed and people going to the ends of the earth to share the gospel of Christ!

There is no doubt in my mind that the Lord wants to do even more than the last three years and even greater and exciting things in the next 5 years. We will begin to unfold parts of that plan beginning next Sunday. The really cool part is we are going to ask you to complete it by being on one of these 4 teams that will help flesh further out the Vision 2020. We have the big pictures, but not the total details which I believe is important because you will have a and will provide valuable insights, direction, and buy-in as your on – not just some cookie cutter plan we present to you but one that is living and breathing, not in concrete and one where we can move with the Spirit as He leads and guides this process.

The End Result of Vision 2020 – Transformed Lives -

We desire to be radically transformed by God into a people He can use to transform others.

So there's the What – Transformed Lives and as our lives are being transformed our hearts move towards desiring to be a people that the Lord can use in order to see other people's live transformed.

That leads us to the 4 key words of Vision 2020

These 4 words and then plans that will go with them will help us address some of the challenges facing our Church Family both from a spiritual standpoint as well as a physical standpoint.

- ✓ **Connect** Yourself & Others to Christ and the Church
- ✓ **Grow** In a Deeping Relationship with Christ
- ✓ **Commit** Your Time and Resources to Serve Christ & Others
- ✓ **Go** Share the Love of Christ With Everyone Everywhere

THE WHO: Us – Petal FBC – A Transformed Church

Who Is It that is going to see Vision 2020 fulfilled? Who is it exactly? It is those of us who are here this morning, those whose membership is here and for those that are yet to be here – in particular for those that are yet to be here that we focus on – it's why God has placed us here. To nurture and grow and challenge those that are here to then take the call of Christ seriously to go those who don't know and are not here and share the Gospel with them or help them get reconnected to the Church. That we would be a healthy, alive, vibrant, passionate, growing, and committed Church that Christ can use in extraordinary ways.

We are going to spend a bulk of our time in 2015 and beyond in the book of Acts to see what the Lord has to say to us here in 2015 from the 1st century about the Church and what she should like today. I want us to look at [Acts 1:8](#) to remind us of our Call and then jump to [Acts 2:37-41](#) [4:32-35](#) and take a brief look at the early Church and the transformation that was taking place in their lives and the lives of those around them. So let's just take a sneak peak there this morning and just where did the ideas of Vision 2020 come from.

✓ There was Connecting to the Lord and to the Church

They were people being saved, [Acts 2:42](#)

✓ There Was Growth Taking place – both spiritual and numerical

✓ There Was Commitment Happening – They were serving and they were Giving. Why? Their Belief in Jesus brought unity in Vision.

✓ They Were Going and Telling others because we see people being added to the Church every single day!

THE HOW: Unrestrained Generosity

If we are that healthy and alive and growing Church – then just like living things they need resources in order to see them to continue to flourish and grow even more and have a greater and wider impact.

I and I wanted to start by talking about the How so that when we began to talk about the what – you will be able to see clearly what we are asking you to commit to in Vision 2020.

Some might feel well all the Church talks about his money. Growing things are alive and alive things needs resources. Dead things, dead churches don't need new or more resources because they don't need any more to fulfill and extra vision.

So don't get hung up on the How, I want to point you back to the What. The What is simply what determines the how!

I don't want you to leave here this morning saying well the church is always talking about money, my prayer is leave saying the church is always talking about how we can reach people with the gospel, helping the poor, helping the widows, helping those in need, planting churches, going to the nation, going to the ends of the earth, and they need some resources to do just that! I am not ashamed to share with you a vision that needs more resources – that we are going to ask you to pray like never before, to give like never before and then go like never before!

The Generosity Ladder

Encouraging Everyone to take the next step up the Generosity Ladder towards our Vision 2020 Ministry Plan Giving.

Last Year our 2014 Ministry Plan was just shy of \$580,000 – and this year our Finance Team has already put forth a temporary plan that is ahead of that which include our entire monthly building payment for the year before we put Vision 2020 plans into place. That amount stand just shy of \$700,000. We say wow- that's double what we brought in just 3 years ago? Is that possible – by man's standards no- by God's yes. As a part of Vision 2020 we want to put ourselves out there that says we simply cannot do this without God's help and the How is a part of that.

How in the world can we get there? Everyone takes the next step. We understand that is hard for folks to go from giving nothing to 10% so our prayer is that many will just take the next step in 2015 and then take another step by 2016 if not sooner towards that mark of financial peace and extravagant giving.

A Breakdown of the Giving by Giving Units and Resident Members or Contributors – What we've been able to track is almost 200 Giving Units (Those who are 18 years or older)

Giving Units give \$5,000 or more

18% of Total Givers Gave 59% of our Resources

Giving Units gave \$1,000-\$5,000

22% of Total Giver gave 25% of our Resources

Giving Units that gave in between the \$1000-\$ 5000 who are not members but simply give

17% of Total Givers gave 13% of our Resources

Giving Units give \$1,000 or less

43% of Total Giver 3% of our Resources

We know that the Median Income is around \$54,000 but for our purpose and easy math, let's put it down to \$50,000. If all our members (Giving Units) we would see just shy of 1 million dollars!

This is again where we understand that discipleship is the issue – it's not about the money, it's about the heart. Stewardship and discipleship go hand in hand. When 42% give that little we have a problem.

But let's clearly say - things are great right now – our giving is as good as it's been in years and years! I am thrilled. But what if everybody's heart was for the poor, the orphan and the widow, if they had a heart for our city, state, nation and the world?

Wow – that's exciting isn't it! So again, how will we do that?

Where are you in this Ladder today as we talk about this?

Financial Stress is on the floor and Financial Peace is at the top. We talked last week some specific ways to do that. You can see it or get the notes on our website.

But how do we have financial peace, is it more inflow or is it honoring the Lord?

The Generosity Ladder – Trial Run on Sunday, March 1st

First Time - You are here and you have never given to the Lord and to the Church. Not talking about amounts, just giving to the Lord. So your first step is just take give for the first time, today, next week whenever or on Sunday, March 1st.

Occasional Maybe you've given before and You're here and you have given before but it's sporadic. It's more event based – like after a message today – where's that \$20 I can drop in the basket. Not a regular thing at all. So for some, you given before but you need to move to occasional.

Intentional For occasional givers it's to move to being intentional. Again not talking about a tithe or amounts here but that you become intentional with your giving. You plan on giving normally and regularly. You give maybe 5% - median income again is 50,000 so you say I'm going to give \$2,500 this year. \$100 every 2 weeks.

Tithing Next step is if you are giving intentionally then you move to tithing – giving 10% to the Lord through the Church. Don't believe in the biblical tithe – that's fine – go ahead give 12%. Most people when they say don't believe in the tithe doesn't mean I'll give that, means I'll give 2%. In the OT they gave 22% - so we go that way we give 22% So maybe in 2015 you go from intentional to tithing and watch and see how the Lord will bless you.

Extravagant The last one is extravagant giving and one that Rebecca moved to a good while ago and love being here and want to do even more in the coming years. We felt the Lord was calling us that the tithe was just the minimum and we wouldn't go back to the tithe ever. Sometimes you have to make some tough choices but the joy far outweighs any minimal sacrifice.

Where are you on this ladder? Walk through the process.

Here is what will happen. If everyone of us will step up the next step on the ladder we will see God do a miracle. There is a place here for everyone. It's not about amounts, it's about obedience. Every person in every stage saying Lord, I'm taking a step of faith!

Refer to the Commitment Card Briefly. I want to ask you to keep this in your Bible over the next 5 weeks and then we will bring these cards on Sunday, March 1 on Generosity Sunday where we will commit and celebrate what the Lord is calling us to do! I can hardly wait!

There is one other piece we are asking you to commit to as well. Take a look quickly at that card.

THE WHERE: Everyone Participating

Everyone Serving on One of the 4 Teams and taking the next step in the journey.

Connect Team

Grow Team

Commit Team

Go Team