

“Our Dream Is To Joyfully Become A Growing Christian Church...” * Sept. 16, 2007 * Eph.1

“Our dream is to joyfully become a growing Christian church, that reaches tens of thousands, teaches thousands, unleashes hundreds in New England and beyond.” (Grace Baptist’s Vision Statement)

I. Ten years ago, Grace drafted 3 statements at the end of a 6-month process of prayer, planning and study:

- A Vision Statement reflecting what God wanted us to **become** as his church.
- A Mission Statement reflecting what God wanted us to **do** as his church.
- A Core-Values Statement reflecting what kind of people God wanted us to **be** as his church.

Does God call us to “review the basics” from time to time?

In the Old Testament, God called his people to review and renew his covenant with them over and over again. And in the New Testament, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper with the words: “Do this to remember me.” Our daily quiet times are themselves an effort of reconnecting with God to find the daily bread we need to keep spiritual nourished. Keep going back to the basics. Keep reminding yourself what it’s all about.

What happens if we don’t?

If we don’t do that, what happens? Cobwebs settle in. Dust gathers. Rust encrusts. Barnacles attach.

II. What are some qualities of a good vision statement?

- A. They’re **forward** - looking.
- B. They’re **visual**.
- C. They’re **broad**.
- D. They’re **inspiring**.

III. “Our dream...”

A. Does God “dream”?

Not the way we do at night when we sleep (because God doesn’t sleep!) But in terms of thinking of the future, and imagining realities that are not yet in place, God dreams. Though he is ‘beyond time’, he enters into that level of existence with us.

B. What sort of things has God dreamed about?

1. The **universe**.
2. The spiritual **order**.
3. Human **beings**. (Eph.1:4)

What did we do with God’s original dream for us?

“For God chose us in him [in Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” This you could say is God’s original vision statement for the human race. God dreamed of a race of living beings, spirit beings occupying material bodies, divided up beautifully, mysteriously into male and female, divided up further into races of varying colors, and cultures of varying experiences – and God dreamed of all of these human beings seeking him, worshipping him, loving him freely as sons and daughters, then filling the earth with the pleasures, goodness and blessings of God’s loving kindness everywhere they went. That was God’s dream when first he made the human race.

And then to God’s sorrow and the dismay of the angels who watched, we took God’s dream and trashed it. We said to God, “Hey God, we have a better idea. How ‘bout we play God. Yeah, that’s what we want. We’ll call the shots. We’ll decide what’s good and what’s evil. See this tree over here, the tree of good and evil, watch this. *Crunch!*”

C. What did God dream of next? (Eph.1:5-7)

Since we refused his offer of sonship through creation, God devised a way to accept his offer of sonship through **adoption**. Call it his ‘revised vision statement.’ “In love, [God] predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves [Jesus].”

*D. If all this is true, then how special must I be to God?
(In your own words, write down what God thinks of you.)*

IV. God's Ultimate Dream

A. What is God's ultimate dream? (Eph.1:9-10)

God's ultimate dream. God's ultimate vision statement.

Verses 9 & 10 – “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”

Do you see it? God's dream! Did you catch a glimpse of it? It's far too amazing to take in or to comprehend, but God's purpose, God's dream is to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ. Put another way: He's going to bring to an end this entire fallen order. This entire creation cursed and corrupted by sin will be healed, restored, made new, made one. You know that big screen TV you've been dreaming about? That vacation down in Aruba? God's got you beat. His dream's a little bigger.

B. And what's the most outlandish part of this dream?

God has purposed in his heart that he wants to use **you** and **me** – the **Church** – as his instruments to help bring about the healing of the universe and the restoring of creation.

Take note of Ephesians 3:10.

“God's intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”

V. Two Vital Questions:

A. If all this is true, what must God think of those who do not yet know Christ?

B. In my own words, what is God's dream for Grace Baptist?