



Read me

# What is the Heart and Core of our Vision?

by: Doug Sparks

Last December the Pacific Asia Navigator National Directors shared their vision and dreams for The Navigator ministry in their countries. These men are not visionaries, rather they are missionaries—men sent with a mission from God who are diligently carrying it out.

The ministries in Asia are breaking forth on the right hand and on the left.

Some ministries are breaking forth with converts ...disciples... laborers... equippers...geographical expansion... sending out missionaries, similar to our historical pattern of the 70's in the West.

Others are focusing on different patterns in discipling the lost, the secularized and the unreached peoples. These new approaches speak of contextualization, mobility of the Gospel, discipling movements and impacting cities.

I am very enthusiastic about the vastness and the diversity of the ministry approaches in each country. I am especially encouraged if these many diverse ministries come out of the same heart and core of our calling from God...many expressions but the same heart and core. Do we still have a common calling, a common vision? What is its heart and core?

I don't see the heart and core of The Navigators as being organizational growth...or discipling movements...or to reach to the unreached...or geographical/sociological expansion. These things may happen, but they are not the heart and core of our calling.

As I wrestled with identifying the common core throughout our diverse ministries, I experienced sleepless nights. Is there one thing that, regardless of the approach, extent or impact of our ministry, has the same unique ingredients?

One night I awoke with a prompting to read Isaiah 50:10-51:4. Though the passage was originally written to Israel, it has application to us both as Christians and as Navigators.

Isaiah 50:10-11 gives one spiritual axiom and one severe warning:

Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment.

The spiritual axiom is: "It is better to walk in the dark, trusting and waiting on God, than to walk in the light and fire of our own visions, plans and ambitions."

The severe warning is against presumptuously lighting our own fires and torches. Here each one lit his own torch and went his own way. God gives a solemn promise to those whose vision is the fire of their own devices. God's hand will bring them down—they will ultimately be prostrate in failure and torment.

We must ask ourselves where our own calling and vision originates. Is it from man or from God? If it is from man, it can come from ourselves, our leader, our

training or some influential teaching.

Only if it comes from God and is implanted by God, will it count for eternity? Jesus said, "Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots" (Matthew 15:13).

In Isaiah 51:1-2 we learn both how to listen to God and what He has to say to us:

Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek

Listening to God begins with a commitment of heart, mind and will to pursue righteousness. It is a devotion to do what is right in the eyes of God no matter what the cost. It is listening to that still, small voice: "This is right...this is the right way...this is the right time to act."

God's voice is heard when we seek Him and are in communion with Him. It is confirmed by Spirit-filled believers. The same Spirit that witnesses to your spirit witnesses to their spirit. Through interaction with Spirit-filled brothers and sisters, as well as praying together, there comes "a unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This affirms God's voice and will.

The leader who seeks God's will only in the privacy of his devotions and not also in discussion and prayer with his co-laborers, is in great danger of self-delusion (lighting his own fire).

My observation of such leaders is that they often become increasingly isolated, insensitive to others, self-willed and eventually get off the track both in the ministry and morally. The



moral problems usually have to do with finances and women.

Hearing God's voice is affirmed in three ways—subjectively, corporately and, ultimately, Scripturally. It is the objective truth of Scripture we see in Isaiah 51:1b-2:

Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father; and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many.

Isaiah tells Israel they must go back to their historical and Biblical roots. Abraham is our father too, the father of faith. The promises given to Abraham are, in Christ, our promises.

“When I called him, he was but one.” Abraham was one man with God. A man who had a relationship of trust and friendship with God.

The focus is not on the man's training, gifts or potential. Abraham was impotent. He was over the hill in almost every way...except with God. All Abraham had was God's friendship and God's promise. And God blessed him and made him many!

“It is not great talents or great learning or great preachers that God needs, but men great in holiness, great faith, great in love, great in fidelity, great for God...These can mold a generation for God.” —E.M. Bounds

What is the heart and core of our vision and our calling? One man like Abraham—onewoman

like Sarah. One person whom God blesses and makes many—that's it!

Again, from E.M. Bounds: “We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the Gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.”

It is not great ideas, great plans, great strategies or great staff that we need...it is being great men and women of God.

It is not a reproducible ministry model that is the heart and core of what we are doing. It is men and women who are friends of God, trusting God to bless and multiply them. The Bible doesn't talk about multiplying ministries—it talks about multiplying the children of God.

It begins with one man. It should begin with you-or with me. It begins with trusting God, developing a friendship with God. It continues by stepping out on God's promises as He leads. It results in God blessing us and making us many.

My main ministry isn't to look for a man like this—it is to be a man like this. My first question should be, “Am I called of God, am I depending solely on God to blessingrowing, challenging ministry

in me and make me many?” As I am an Abraham, then I look to God to give me an Isaac. When I have an Isaac, I can ask, “Where is your Jacob?”

In the midst of a demanding, your country, in the midst of all your activities, in the midst of all the people around you, are you being the one called of God and are you looking for the one called of God—who God blesses and who becomes many?

It is not the ministry models that God blesses. It is not the methods. It is not contextualization. God blesses a man—a certain type of man—His trusting, loving friend.

The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her; thanks giving and the sound of singing. Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation. The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations.

In Isaiah 51:3, 4 we see what God does through such trusting friends. In each of our countries, spiritual deserts will become gardens of the Lord. The Word will go out from the Lord and His justice will shine to the nations. Joy and gladness will characterize His people.

All that we desire to accomplish in our countries and among the unreached peoples of Asia, God will do. He will do it through trusting, loving friends who act on His promises. There is no substitute for one man, called and blessed by God. Remove that heart and core of our vision and we will end our ministry with this generation.

