



Idea: Jesus has called us to be a church that intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations.

Intro: On December 17, 1903, at 10:35am, Orville Wright secured his place in history by executing the first powered and sustained flight from level ground. He defied gravity for twelve long seconds and flew 120 feet along the dunes of the Outer Banks of North Carolina. This historic achievement was, for Orville and his brother Wilbur, initiated by a dream common to every little boy. The Wright brothers wanted to fly and envisioned themselves taking a flight one day. They audaciously believed they could fly, and perhaps most importantly, they believed they should fly.

The Wright brothers possessed what Andy Stanley calls “visioneering.” This is a word he defines as “the engineering of a vision.” The Wright brothers’ combination of inspiration, conviction, action, determination, and completion resulted in their vision becoming a reality. They built a plane, got in it, and made it fly.

According to John Maxwell “vision is everything for a leader.” I would say that it is just as important for the one who follows the leader. Vision is a crucial necessity for the local church, which raises a question. What is vision? We might simply define it as “the faculty or state of being able to see.” I wear contacts and use readers because I want and need to be able to see things. Good vision allows you to see things crisply and clearly. You see, vision ensures that my day has the propensity to be productive. It does not guarantee productivity, but vision does pave the way for it. The Bible explains this principle and the importance of it.

Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law. – Proverbs 29:18

Inquiry: The Hebrew term translated “prophetic vision” in the ESV is used some 31 times in the Old Testament and denotes that which is communicated by God to man through prophetic preaching.

As the salt of the earth, God’s people are expected to arrest corruption, and as the light of the world they are commanded to dispel darkness. In the absence of prophetic vision, the reverse happens. *People become spiritually defenseless.* When they turn their eyes from God they become vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. When left defenseless, *people become naturally defiant.* They cease to acknowledge God (Rom 1:28ff), which leads to God giving them over to a debased mind. They “*cast off restraint.*” Then *people become personally destructive.* As they lose faith in divine revelation, they are filled with all kinds of wickedness (Rom 1:29).

Where and when God’s people are prepared to see and heed divine revelation, there is a reversal of the sequence of moral deterioration. The proverb continues, “*but blessed is he who keeps the law.*” Prophetic vision always

produces two things: redemptive passion and responsive action. God's Word is all about redemption. When we grasp and heed the divine Word, it creates within each of us a passion over our own redemption and a passion to see others redeemed. This passion leads to our action. Thus, vision begets venture.

"The Christians who have turned the world upside down for God have been men and women with a vision in their hearts, and the Bible in their hands." – T.B. Matson

Unfortunately, even when the vision has been clearly articulated and received, there are some who choose to dispel it for something they think to be easier or better. We see this happen often throughout the history of Israel. The most outrageous depictions of this are found in the exodus and the wanderings in the wilderness. Time and time again the Israelites chose to not believe God in the face of undeniable miracles. They even went so far as to declare they wanted to go back to Egypt rather than wander in the wilderness (Num 14:3).

Why would a free people ever want to go back into bondage? How can a group of people who had seen God do such extraordinary and miraculous things not believe that He could and would sustain them in the wilderness? What would cause this people who had seen the mightiest army on the face of the earth defeated in the Red Sea not believe God could and would defeat the peoples living in the Promised Land?

The answer is the same thing that prevents us from attempting great things today. The answer is fear...fear of the unknown.

Rather than staking their lives on what God had said would happen, Israel feared what could happen. Fear of the unknown is always a danger to us. Fear keeps us satisfied with the status quo.

As the enemy of change and stealer of ambition, fear is the champion of the half-measure, the checked swing, the almost-there. It softens the hard stance, rounds the sharp edge, and dulls the shine of a new idea. Courage, though, changes everything.

I have known many Christians over the years that lived in fear of the unknown. Perhaps some of you have given in to your fears. Transition of any kind makes you anxious, so the thought of Red Lane changing at all makes you break out in a cold sweat. Let me help all of us out this morning. Transition is not a bad word. In many ways, it is a sign of health. A healthy and vibrant church is always in a state of transition because people, culture, and life itself are always in transition. We can either choose to drive the disruption around us or be outpaced by it.

Over the last several years, we have worked to articulate what we believe to be God's vision for Red Lane.

Things We Know:

- God has called us to declare His glory. (Ps 96:1-8)
- God has called us to make disciples of our neighbors and the nations. (Matt 28:18-20)
- God has called us to proclaim the Word of God. (2 Tim 4:1-2)
- God has called us to reflect His love and unity through biblical community. (Eph 2:19-22)

What does this look like at Red Lane?

- Worship is blended and multigenerational.
Our desire is to progressively learn new ways to worship Christ. We want to sing a new song (Ps 96:1) while also singing the old songs. We want to engage the hearts of men, women, boys, and girls in our worship settings. This is why the vast majority of what we sing is congregational singing rather than "specials." We seek to engage the heart of God in our worship settings. We celebrate God and proclaim His glory. We sing songs that are rich in theology because it enriches our faith rather than our feelings. Our desire is to create a worship environment that prepares us for the preaching of the Word and

whereby the hearts from every generation can declare God's greatness. The focus is on faith rather than feelings.

- Preaching is primary.
The first mark of the true church is the preaching of the Word of God. The focus of the service is always going to be on the proclamation of the Word (Rom 10:17). We want our members and regular attenders to be built up in the Word of God. Again, the focus is on our faith rather than our feelings.
- Missions is our passion.
Missions is built into our DNA. God has called out the Dorners, Haneys, and Allison from this church in recent years to serve on the mission field. Our desire is for every covenant member to participate in short-term mission trips. As a church we want to ever be expanding our missions' footprint around the globe as we seek to reach unreached, unengaged people groups (UUPGs). We want to reach the internationals that God has brought to our doorstep, and we want to create ways to go to the people in Powhatan rather than expecting them to come to us.
- Discipleship is our identity.
The command of the Great Commission is to make disciples. We learn from the Bible that discipleship is the goal of biblical community. God has called us to make disciples, and this means evangelizing unbelievers, welcoming them into His kingdom and church, and then discipling them to grow closer to the perfect example set forth by the Son.

Discipleship fosters both spiritual and evangelistic growth. Therefore, every believer should be able to answer two questions, "Who am I discipling?" and "Who is discipling me?"

Every one of you should be an active member of a small group. You should also be actively involved in a smaller group of 3-5 believers. For it is in these discipleship groups that you will develop deeper relationships and thus grow deeper in your faith.

- Growth is expected.
As we intentionally engage people with the gospel in our community, and as we intentionally seek to develop disciples of Christ, we are going to grow spiritually and numerically as a church. Professions of faith and baptisms are expected. Therefore, our numbers are expected to increase.

Even still, there are typically two dominant perspectives present in any local church. The first perspective views the church as a social club. Those who hold this view would likely never refer to it as a social club, yet their desire to be entertained, to network with others, and to *feel good* while present say otherwise. The second perspective views the church as a spiritual movement. Their emphasis is not on entertainment but on discipleship. They take the teaching of the Bible seriously, seeking to apply all of it to their lives. They understand that the church is not so much about them as it is about God and others. They actively look for people who need to hear the gospel.

In Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8, we find our marching orders as a local church. It is how we flesh out worship, preaching, and mission. Jesus has called us to be a church that intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations. This vision will require us to constantly evaluate our methods and to be ready to tweak them. It will require us to get out of our comfort zones, to climb out of our ruts, and to be willing to do something fresh and new for the Kingdom. It will require a vision of what can and should be.

A vision is a mental image of what the future will or could be like. A compelling vision includes 4 components:

- The Problem

- The Solution
- The reason something must be done.
- The reason something must be done *now*.

What is the problem?

There are over 31,000 people living in Powhatan. According to NAMB's estimated percentage of lostness in America (75%), 23,250 are dead in sin and trespasses. Of the 1.4 million people in the metro area, over 1 million are cut off from Christ and in darkness. They are headed for a devil's hell.

What is the solution?

The solution is the church. It is you and me. We have the light of the gospel. We are Christ's witnesses in this dark, sinful world. Jesus has called, commissioned, and empowered us to go to those lost in their sin with the gospel. We are the solution. Our church is the solution.

Why does something need to be done?

We must do something because Jesus told us to go and make disciples. We also must do something because they are in their sin. There is no way for their situation to be improved. They are dead. If we do not go or do something, who will?

Why does something need to be done now?

Time is of the essence. It is running out. Every day that passes is a day closer to the return of Christ. Every day that passes is a day closer to the moment that a person enters eternity. The Great Commission calls us to be urgent with the gospel.

As we seek to be a church that intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations, it is important to have a plan. Over the last several years, we have had a plan of action and have been working it.

Where we have been

In 2017 we...

- renovated the children's ministry areas
- expanded our community outreach events
- resurfaced our parking lot
- partnered in gospel work in Barcelona

In 2018 and 2019 we...

- sent teams to Barcelona
- sent a team to Sweden
- sent a team to South Asia
- began planning for construction and renovation projects.

In 2020 we...

- partnered with a church plant in Short Pump (The Way Church)
- began construction on administration building

In 2021 we...

- partnered with a church plant in Blacksburg (The Vine Church)
- completed the administration building
- finalized plans for renovation project

In 2022 we...

- will work with The Vine Church
- will send a team to South Asia
- completed renovation of main level

Why was it necessary to do this renovation that we celebrate today? The reason is because the Sunday morning worship service is the front door of our church. The worship center had undergone very few upgrades over the last 35+ years, so it was time to update it. The space needed to be brought into the 21st century. This space is a tool for us to use, and we needed to sharpen the tool because it had become dull.

We also needed to get all our senior adults on one level, so they did not have to go up and down stairs between worship and small groups. This move required the church office to be relocated into a new space out back.

Where we are going

As a church we believe that we exist to bring glory to God by making disciples of our neighbors and the nations. This mission will be accomplished as we...

- Utilize and welcome growth in our worship and small group times
 - A second worship service will need to be added soon.
 - A second small group will need to be added within 18-24 months.
- Speak and live out the gospel.
 - Share the gospel where we live, work, and play.
 - Personally, disciple new believers.
- Reengage unreached peoples in hard-to-reach places.

This vision for our church is not new. It is the vision Jesus has had for His church from the beginning. He has called and sent us to reach and make disciples of our neighbors and the nations. Faithful stewardship is required for us to live out this vision. Faithful stewardship will require us to be a...

- Praying People
The task is far too great to do on our own. We must be a praying and dependent people, trusting in God's provision and favor. Let's lock hearts and minds together and pray.
- Serving People
The task is far too great for one person or even a handful of people to do. We must all use our giftedness and passions to serve others. There is no way for us to sustain the growth we have experienced in the last few months. We need more volunteers in children's ministry, hospitality, worship, adult small groups, and elders. We need your help by serving.
- Generous People
Financial stewardship is a big deal in Scripture. God calls us to give to Him our first and our best when it comes to our finances. When you do tithe and give an offering through this church, you are making an investment in God's work. As a church we take the gifts given and invest them in gospel work. This work involves missions, church planting, student ministry, children's ministry, facilities, construction, and many other tools.

The Lord has provided wonderfully through His people over the last 3+ years. The newDay capital campaign enabled us to pay for most of the administration building in cash. Vision 2024 is our current campaign. Over the next three years through this offering, we want to invest more dollars above and beyond the tithe to enrich our ministry offerings, expand our Acts 1:8 strategy, enhance our campus, and establish margin for future ministry.

If you do not currently give, I want to ask you to begin with the simple tithe to our operating budget. If you tithe, would you prayerfully consider giving above and beyond to Vision 2024?

- **Going People**

Christ has commissioned and commanded us to go to our neighbors and the nations. You are a missionary where you live, work, and play. Are you living out the gospel in your circles of influence? God is using the members of our church to reach people in their circles. I joked with some folks the other day that it will not be long till all Tilman Farms and Oak Leaf are attending Red Lane. Our members are going across the street to their neighbors.

You are also to be a missionary in hard places. The nations need to hear the gospel and have an opportunity to respond in repentance and faith. Will you go to them? Will you answer the call?

Conclusion: Orville and Wilbur Wright audaciously believed they could fly and should fly. We too believe God wants to do big things in and through us. As we envision what the Lord desires for us, we see generations of people taking the gospel to our neighbors and the nation, seeing hope come to the hopeless, healing to the broken, forgiveness to the sinful, and reconciliation to the separated. We see people following Jesus and experiencing the miracle of restoration in their lives. This will happen as we intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to the lost and live it out.

For years, I preached a very similar message and asked the church if they would go with me? Our church has changed, so I ask again, will you work alongside me? Will you sacrifice with me? Will you be willing to go with me? Will you partner with me as we seek to drive disruption? Will you intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently join me in taking the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations? Will you pray, serve, give, and go in new and greater ways?