

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Lessons from David and Psalm 68



T. M. Moore

A ReVision Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Visionary Leadership

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Visionary Leadership

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Visionary Leadership

Welcome to *Visionary Leadership*

Welcome to *Visionary Leaders*, a study in David's approach to leading the nation of Israel in building the temple of the Lord. *Visionary Leadership* is one of our *ReVision* studies in Biblical worldview.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

Take one lesson at a time, reading the Scriptures and narrative aloud, and pausing to reflect on and discuss the questions provided. Don't be in a hurry. Be willing to take more than one session on a lesson if it will allow you to delve more deeply into the subject matter.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to "have all the answers." Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 David's Works

Now David said, "Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all countries. I will now make preparation for it." So David made abundant preparations before his death. 1 Chronicles 22.5

Astonishing success

By any measure, the last years of David's reign over Israel were astonishingly busy and fruitful. It is unlikely any king or leader of any enterprise has accomplished so much in so short a time as David did during that sundown season of his life.

Unlike so many of the kings who would follow him, David went out with a bang, not a whimper.

It is instructive to thumb through the catalog of everything David accomplished before handing the kingdom over to Solomon. Let's take a whirlwind look.

Orders of people

It takes fully 8 chapters of 1 Chronicles to detail the work David accomplished at the end of his reign. One aspect that stands out prominently is his skill in getting people organized and ready to serve the wellbeing of the nation.

David organized the Levites into divisions of laborers in order to carry out the everyday needs of serving the temple (1 Chron. 23).

He also assigned the priests, musicians, and gatekeepers to their particular roles, and made sure they had the resources they would need in order to carry out their tasks (chapters 22-26).

On a national scale he re-organized the military in order to secure the gains made under his leadership, and he established heads of tribes throughout the land to ensure that justice and order would be observed in each community (chapter 27).

By putting all these people in place, assigning their duties, and providing the resources they needed, David was able to hand the rule of the kingdom over to Solomon before he died, and to ensure the leaders as he had established them would be loyal to the new king.

Temple preparations

All this activity was motivated by David's determination to build a temple for the Lord. The Lord had given David the plans for the temple, and he had written them down so that he could pass along the vision in tact to Solomon (1 Chron. 28.11-19). The temple was to be conspicuous for its beauty, magnificence, and glory – like no temple the world had ever seen.

And David didn't content himself merely with drawing up the plans. He also motivated and led the people to give generously, even lavishly, of their personal wealth in order to make the temple what David envisioned. As David explained, he rallied the people to give "one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure, for it is so abundant. I have prepared timber and stone also, and you may add to them" (1 Chron. 22.14, 15). David rallied all the leaders he had appointed to follow his example of giving from his personal treasure in preparing for the temple, and we can be sure that those leaders, in turn, motivated the people they served to follow suit (1 Chron. 29.6-9). Indeed, we are told that "the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the

LORD...” (1 Chron. 29.9).

David also enlisted workers of every trade from all over the land to join together in the effort to raise this glorious house of worship for the Lord.

By all accounts, David’s last works present an amazing catalog of leadership skills and fruitful endeavor.

So, how was David able to accomplish this? How could he, who had not always known the support of his nation, create such unity, generosity, structure, and energy for his project and legacy?

He did it through visionary leadership, and, as we shall see in this series, he used the worship services of the people of God to cast the vision and enlist the people in a large, common project that would redound to the glory of God even as it also served to undergird their most essential spiritual needs.

David was a visionary leader, and we want to learn from him as much as we can about building the Lord’s temple – His Church – in our own day.

For reflection or discussion

1. What should be the primary works any local church should expect to accomplish?
2. What would you describe as the most important works your church is doing at this time?
3. What is the vision of your local church? That is, what do you aspire to achieve as a congregation? Would you say this is a vision befitting the God you serve? Why or why not?
4. What makes a good church leader?
5. What are your goals for this study? What do you hope to learn?

Next steps: What do we mean by “visionary leader”? Would you describe the leaders of your church as “visionary”? Do they think of themselves this way? Ask a few of them.

Prayer:

2 The Vision of God

*Blessed be the LORD,
Who daily loads us with benefits,
The God of our salvation!
Selah
Our God is the God of salvation...* Psalm 68.19, 20

Psalm 68

I think it would be fair to describe many of the psalms of David as “visionary.” Consider Psalm 110, with David seeing his Lord seated at the right hand of God, sending His people out over all the earth like refreshing dew, while all His enemies are being put under His feet.

Or Psalm 23, in which the Lord is cast as the Shepherd of His people, guiding, guarding, and girding them with the strength of His presence, now and forever.

Psalm 22 by David depicts the suffering of the Messiah, but His ultimate victory over death, while Psalm 72 celebrates Messiah’s Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit over all the earth.

Many of David’s psalms are like this, projecting powerful images and a compelling vision of the Lord in His glory and power. In Psalm 68 that vision of the Lord is directly connected with anticipation of the temple, which is mentioned in several places in the psalm, but which, in David’s day, had not yet been built.

David appears to have intended Psalm 68 as a kind of rallying-cry for the nation, a centerpiece for their worship to help them lock into his vision and plans during the later years of his reign. And in Psalm 68 the focal point of all attention and movement is the vision of God and His glory.

God with His people

This vision becomes clear through several important images and teachings about God. First is the reminder of God’s covenant promise, that He will be with His people to care for and bless them. David portrays God as in the midst of His people, rising to dispel and destroy all their enemies, leading them to rejoice in His presence (vv. 1-3; cf. Ps. 16.11).

God comes to dwell in the midst of His people, selecting a holy mountain as His habitation, recalling His appearing to Israel on Mt. Sinai (vv. 5, 15, 16). He will dwell with them forever, never failing nor forsaking them and standing always ready to defend them against every threat.

He is with His people to rule over them, having ascended His holy mountain from which He receives and distributes gifts to His people (vv. 17-19; cf. Eph. 4.8). God is the God Who is with His people, in the midst of their daily struggles and the uncertainties of the future. He is the God of blessing and the God of salvation; He is everything Israel needs, and He is with them always, even to the end of the age.

God sovereign

Second, David shows God as sovereign, exalted far above the earth and its kingdoms, ruling from the heavens and directing the clouds, winds, and rain as He pleases (vv. 4, 8, 9).

From His dwelling place in the midst of His people, God rules all the nations of the earth, defeating and dispersing His enemies (vv. 1-3, 12, 14), claiming their lands for Himself (vv. 7-10), and visiting His just

judgment against every transgressor (v. 21).

All the nations of the earth acknowledge the sovereignty of God and bring gifts to honor Him at His temple (v. 29). Indeed, the nations of the world will sing to God as they submit themselves to Him and His mighty, sovereign power (vv. 30-32).

God is for His people

Finally, David celebrates God as the sovereign, “with-us” God Who is absolutely *for* His people and determined to do them good. He is Father to the fatherless, Defender of widows, the One Who gives homes to the homeless and release to captives (vv. 5, 6). He gives them gifts, blessings, and salvation (vv. 18-20), and He calls them into His presence to celebrate His magnificence in worship (vv. 24-28). He gives strength for His people to do all His bidding (v. 28) and to know Him in His glory in the heavens (v. 33). Over His people Israel, God is strong, excellent, awesome, and powerful.

And this God is the focal point of David’s vision. Everything David would undertake, and call the people to undertake with him, was in obedience to, worship of, and for the proclamation of the name of this God. God – not David or his project – was the driving force for what David accomplished at the end of his reign.

When our visions for the Lord’s Church are firmly grounded in a vision of Christ exalted, advancing His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, then we may expect the people to rally to the work we’ve been given to do.

For reflection or discussion

1. How is the vision of God communicated in your church? Does gaining a vision of God seem to be a high priority in your church? Why or why not?
2. In your own walk with and work for the Lord, how do you nurture this vision of God?
3. Meditate on Ephesians 1.15-23. What are the most important aspects of Paul’s vision of God?
4. What does Paul mean by the “eye of the heart”? How does this function in relation to the vision of God?
5. Do you think if Christians had a “bigger” vision of God they would be more faithful in their work for Him? In what ways?

Next steps: What vision of God comes from the teaching and preaching in your church? Talk with some fellow church members about this question.

Prayer:

3 The Promise of the Past

*O God, when You went out before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness, Selah
The earth shook;
The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God;
Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. Psalm 68:7, 8*

Bible times and our times

I get the impression that some Christians think there are two kinds of history, two kinds of time.

First, there is Bible time, and Bible history. Things happened in the Bible that were unique, and that we don't expect to see happen in normal time and history, where we live, you know, *today*.

Things like God doing extraordinary acts of deliverance, help, and support, or extraordinary empowerments for witness or service. Like Moses leading the people out of Egypt, or Joshua leading them to subdue the land of promise, or David leading an entire nation to build a glorious temple for the Lord. That was *then*, many Christians seem to think; this is *now*.

But when we think this way we may be cutting ourselves off from one of the most powerful resources for visionary leadership, and that is the promise of the past.

David understood the power of the past to enlist people in the ongoing story of God's covenant. We can learn from him how to make the most of our long and vast heritage as the people of God.

God's work in the past

In Psalm 68 David is trying to rally the people of Israel to take up the challenge of building a glorious temple for the Lord. He knows that, unless the whole nation gets involved, he will not be able to fulfill the vision and plan God gave Him for honoring the Lord and blessing His people.

So in pointing the people forward to the work they needed to do, he first pointed them backwards in time to the work God had already accomplished through His people. The first part of Psalm 68 addresses God's work in and through His people under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. God Who rides the clouds and rules the rains came to be with His people in the Wilderness, where He sustained them and made them and the land ready for their ultimate conquest (vv. 4-9).

David includes in this recounting a warning against those who fail to trust the Lord and follow His will when he writes, "He brings out those who are bound into prosperity;/But the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*" (v. 6). Those who rebelled against God's plans for His people died in the Wilderness, while those who obeyed and served achieved prosperity and freedom.

Next, David briefly recalls the conquest of the land of promise, when all the kings of Canaan were scattered and the people occupied their lands together with the Lord (vv. 11-16). Look, David is saying, remember what God has done in the past. Nothing is impossible for Him. No vision is too grand, no project too daunting. He has revealed His will and called us to obey, and we have every reason to expect that He will accomplish what He has appointed for us.

The past as promise

David insisted there was a straight line from Moses to Joshua to him and his generation. The God Who worked for their forebears would work for them according to His revealed purposes and will. That's as true today as it was in David's day.

Visionary leaders understand that God has done remarkable, nearly incredible things in the past, and they reach back and recall those mighty works of God in order to encourage His people in the present. They recognize that the straight line of the covenant continues from Scripture through Church history right down to our day.

Throughout the period of Christian history what God has accomplished in, for, and through His people is nothing short of amazing. Millions have been converted to Christ. Revivals have broken out with powerful effects. Nations have been transformed. Empires have submitted to the rule of King Jesus. In every field of endeavor Christians have made innovations and contributions which continue to redound to the wellbeing of people everywhere. This record and archive presents a rich resource for moving the people of God to action in our day.

Our secular opponents would like for us to believe there is a difference between Bible times and our times. They want us to think, if we must think about God at all, that He has confined His working to the stories of the Bible, and He has no power or right to intervene or interfere in our present. We may believe in Him if we choose, but we must not suppose that He can be invoked for any mighty works in our times.

But visionary leaders like David know otherwise, and they will marshal as many as possible of the resources of our Christian past to inform, inspire, instruct, and engage the citizens of God's Kingdom today.

For reflection or discussion

1. What does T. M. mean by "the promise of the past?"
2. What aspects of our Christian past seem most relevant to the situation of your church today? Why?
3. In what ways, or by what means, is our Christian past employed to cast a vision for your church? Do you think the history of God's works in the past has power to inspire people today? Why or why not?
4. Can you think of one person or event or aspect of our Christian past that inspires you? Explain.
5. Why is it not a good idea for churches to set aside older forms of liturgy, including prayers, orders of worship, and hymns?

Next steps: Does the Christian past feature in your discipleship? In the teaching and preaching of your church? Ask a pastor or church leader what you might expect to gain from a better understanding of Church history, and how you might begin to acquire that understanding.

Prayer:

4 The Temple and Its Impact

*O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places.
The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people.
Blessed be God! Psalm 68.35*

A magnificent temple

It's interesting to speculate about how David communicated his vision for the temple to the people of Israel. We know that he had written plans and diagrams which were approved by God Himself (1 Chron. 28.19). Were these copied and sent around to all the villages of Israel? Were local leaders brought to Jerusalem to hear the plans and perhaps see a mock-up?

He must have done some things like this, for he managed to generate an overwhelming response from the people in terms of time, treasure, talent, and strength for the project. Visionary leaders understand that vision has to be communicated, clarified, and communicated again and again if it's to have the effect of moving people to respond.

At the very least we know this: David wrote Psalm 68 and put it to work in the worship of God. Probably the psalm was used at large national worship events, such as the feast days of Israel. But it may have found its way back to local communities and families, where the people would certainly have been struck with the many benefits associated with God's coming to dwell in His temple.

The blessings of God's presence

Chief among these was the promise of God's coming to dwell among them in glory. This is the heart of God's covenant: "I will be Your God, and You will be My people, and I will show you My glory." The building of the temple meant that God was coming to dwell among His people, not in a threadbare tabernacle that, by David's day, must have been in need of continual repair, but in a glorious structure of beauty, majesty, and imposing dignity and power.

When God came to dwell among His people, He would distribute the blessings and benefits of salvation liberally, meeting all the needs of His people and causing them to prosper in every way (vv. 18-20).

Further, all the enemies of Israel would be subdued and scattered, and the people would dwell in peace. They would begin to enjoy all the promises of God's covenant in greater measure, because He was coming to dwell with them. All His people would have access to Him, to bring with grateful hearts their gifts to Him Who gifted them so lavishly in all their ways.

Lord of the nations

David also assured the people that the nations surrounding Israel, their historic and often vicious enemies, would come under the rule and jurisdiction of God Himself.

It must have been a matter of some consternation for Israelites to ponder David's passing. He had been such a powerful king, and had subdued so many of their enemies. Now Israel maintained outposts among their enemies as far away as Damascus, and David promised that God would ensure that the enemies of His people would no longer threaten their peace (vv. 28-32).

Indeed, so glorious would be the presence of God in His temple that the nations of the earth would bring gifts to Him, and come to Him seeking wisdom to rule their own peoples according to the wisdom and glory of God. We see this promise fulfilled in detail during the years of Solomon's reign after the temple had been

finished (cf. 1 Kgs. 10).

And the nations would know that, as glorious and splendid as was the temple the people had constructed for their God, God Himself was immeasurably greater, more powerful, more glorious than even this structure suggested (v. 35). The strength and power of God, to which the temple bore witness, He would give to His people to continue and extend His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (v. 35).

Thus the people were encouraged that taking up the work of this temple was a double blessing. God would be glorified and worshiped, even by pagan kings and peoples. And they would know the fullness of His blessing and presence with them, in prosperity and peace.

Jesus intends His Church to be a blessing to the world – a source of beauty and joy (Ps. 48.13), and the light of the world, salt of the earth, and leaven of grace and truth in a sin-withered world. As Christ comes to dwell with His people, in the Person of His Holy Spirit, we should expect great blessings and abundant honor to redound to our King and God.

Visionary leaders know that Christ intends great designs for His Church. He has written them in His Word and entrusted them to the shepherds of His flock. Our task is to show those plans and designs to His people, to encourage them in the work of building the Church, the dwelling-place of Christ, the epicenter of His Kingdom, and the source of joy for the world.

For reflection or discussion

1. What impact did David expect once the temple had been constructed? Meditate on 1 Kings 10. Was David right?
2. What impact has your church had on the local community? What impact are you hoping to have?
3. Do you think it's wise for churches to thinking about making an impact on their community? Why or why not?
4. "Jesus intends His Church to be a blessing to the world – a source of beauty and joy (Ps. 48.13), and the light of the world, salt of the earth, and leaven of grace and truth in a sin-withered world. As Christ comes to dwell with His people, in the Person of His Holy Spirit, we should expect great blessings and abundant honor to redound to our King and God." Agree or disagree? Why?
5. Can you think of any examples from Scripture that describe the kind of impact a local church should have in its community?

Next steps: Do your church leaders have a vision for your church like this? Ask a few of your church leaders, or your pastor, to summarize your church's vision for being the beauty, joy, Kingdom epicenter, and light of your community. Offer to do whatever you can to help realize this vision.

Prayer:

5 Minds and Hearts

*But let the righteous be glad;
Let them rejoice before God;
Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.* Psalm 68.5

Elements of an effective vision

It's clear, even from a casual reading of Psalm 68, that David was a master at casting vision.

He focused his vision on God and His greatness, and all the great and mighty things God had done for His people in the past. He isolated a particular project – building the temple – and set that squarely down within the covenant purposes of God. He led the people to see the project as God did, according to His Word, and He showed them all the benefits that would accrue to them and to the nations as this project came to completion.

David captured the minds of the people of Israel. He placed a vision in their thinking that undoubtedly became a topic of much animated conversation as people talked together throughout the land. He gave them words to use in their conversations and worship, the words of Psalm 68, so that they had something clear and concrete to wrap their minds around as they considered what their part in this project must be.

But David didn't stop with informing the minds of God's people. He drove straight to the hearts, stimulating their affections in powerful ways, so that they would *desire* this vision and project enough to do whatever was required to bring it to pass.

Let's take a closer look.

A wide range of affections

David understood what his son Solomon would insist on in Proverbs 4.23: All the great issues of life proceed from the *heart*. Unless the hearts of people are fully and appropriately engaged, any action they may take toward realizing a vision will be less than whole-hearted and, therefore, likely to fail.

David drove his vision into the hearts of his people as surely as Peter drove the Word of God into his hearers on that first Christian Pentecost. The people of Israel were “stabbed in their hearts” as David held out God's vision for them, so much so that they could not *not* respond to his call.

David held out the promise of much *rejoicing* – of joy and gladness – to the people of Israel. As God comes to dwell among His people they would rejoice and sing and praise the Lord and be filled with gladness in His presence (vv. 3, 4). No one will take up the challenge of a merely intellectual vision – a promise of more members or new buildings or further outreach or new programs. But show them, and persuade them, that your vision will fill them with rejoicing and praise and thanksgiving, and you'll begin to win them to it.

Notice also that David encouraged the people that God's coming to dwell among them would give them new *boldness* to engage their enemies and proclaim the greatness of the Lord (vv. 12, 20-23). David did not call the people to be courageous; he promised them that, once the temple was finished and God had filled it with His glorious presence, they would simple be bolder by His being among them.

Finally, we note David's appeal to personal *significance*, the feeling of importance, that I matter and that I have something to contribute to God's Kingdom. He encouraged the people to see themselves as abundantly blessed with many gifts from God. But he also led them to think they would be able to come into the very

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presence of God, with whatever their gifts, offerings, or possessions might be, however great or small, and to present these to God for His pleasure and purposes. Everyone had something to give, David encouraged them to see, because everyone was being abundantly blessed by God. And the record, as we have seen, shows that the people rallied to that sense of significance and gave abundantly for the work of David's vision.

Visionary leaders know they have to capture the minds – the imaginations – of those they are seeking to lead to greater heights of work and achievement for the Lord. They need to paint large, bold pictures of what God is planning to do with them, and to communicate that vision over and over and over, so that it becomes fixed in the minds of the people, as evidenced in their conversation with one another.

But visionary leaders also need to go for the hearts of the people as well, to stimulate their affections, shape their desires and longings, and help them re-order their priorities accordingly. David did this amazingly well, and all he was doing was building a temple. We are called to join Christ in building His temple, His nation, His Body, the salt, light, and leaven of the world! How many more of the affections of God's people must we seek to engage with so glorious a vision and grand a promise as this!

For reflection or discussion

1. What is the mind? What does it contribute to the Christian life?
2. What about the heart? What is its role in our life as disciples?
3. And the conscience?
4. Why is it important to engage all these facets of the soul in casting a vision for the life of faith and the local church?
5. If you could think of one thing to be part of your church's vision, one thing that would really capture your imagination (mind), get your excited (heart), and move you to make room in your priorities to work for this goal (conscience) – what would that one thing be? Why?

Next steps: What are you excited about in your church's vision? What gets your heart beating and takes over your desires as you think about contributing something to the work of your church? Talk with some fellow church members about this question.

Prayer:

6 Vision and Worship

*They have seen your procession, O God,
The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.* Psalm 68.24

The culmination

It is not by coincidence that David ends Psalm 68 with a vision of the people and nations at worship. The worship, praise, glory, and honor of God must be the end of every vision, or that vision is not worth pursuing.

Psalm 68 is a psalm for worship. It begins in a picture of God's people worshipping Him, and ends in that same place (cf. vv. 4, 24-26, 35). David wrote Psalm 68 for the chief musician, so he wanted it to be arranged for instruments and voices, to make it as full and glorious and powerful for worship as possible.

But he also wrote it as song, one the people could join to sing. Songs stick with us. Their melodies and phrases come to mind at all times of the day and night. And this makes singing not only a powerful discipline for the worship of God, but for settling God's vision for His people in their hearts and minds as well.

Worship, therefore, is the beginning, end, and purpose of Psalm 68. And this is precisely as it should be, for worship, of all the activities a community of believers might engage, is *the* context for communicating, nurturing, enlarging, and deepening commitment to the Lord's vision for His people.

Worship as the context for vision

Psalm 68 helps to see why this is so.

First, here, as in all his psalms, David shows us that the *focus* of worship is *upward and beyond*. Worship is about God, His greatness, majesty, enormity, glory, and power, and all that God has promised and intends to do according to His plans. Worship is not about people and their needs. People come with their needs to worship, but unless the focus of worship is upward – to God – and beyond – to the joy and peace and purpose that come from God's promises – people will leave worship, not with a compelling vision but a temporary fix for whatever ails them.

Worship reinforces this upward and beyond focus by resorting to examples of God's work in the past, both in Scripture and the history of the Christian movement. For an example of the latter, let me simply insist that it is a mistake for church leaders to jettison the liturgies and hymns of the past in an effort to make worship contemporary, "relevant," or hip. What kind of vision does that communicate? That we can be just like the rest of the world? How does rejecting our Christian heritage in worship remind us that, in the past, God has used specific practices of worship and even specific hymns to strengthen, support, equip, motivate, and send His people in mission for His glory?

Even the singing of a simple hymn like "Kyrie, Eleison" can have a powerful effect on worshipers, when it is rightly understood. The Latin words of this hymn are not difficult to remember. They translate to, "Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!" We need mercy for everything in our lives, as all God's people always have, and only our powerful, loving, forgiving, and saving God can grant the mercy we sorely need. If we also knew that this hymn was originally a children's song, when it was introduced in the fourth century in Milan, we might think to ourselves, "If even children need mercy from God, then what about me?"

Worship that does not bring forward the works of God in the past, using liturgical forms from our Christian heritage, will have a difficult time projecting a vision of how our covenant God might work in and through us in the present.

The inevitability of the Kingdom

Finally, worship is the primary context in which we review and recommit to our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12). In worship we come before God, bringing our gifts, our praises, and our broken and contrite hearts, and here we are reminded that we are *His* temple, *His* nation, *His* servants and ambassadors, and we receive the equipping we need to go as light, salt, and leaven to a needy world.

Worship should take us upward into the presence of God and beyond our present experience and selves, toward the precious and very great promises of God in Christ (2 Pet. 1.4; 2 Cor. 1.20). In worship our vision is clarified and enlarged, and we take our place in that long train of faithful witnesses and worshipers through whom God's Kingdom is advancing on earth as it is in heaven.

David used worship to cast God's vision for His people; and the people embraced that vision with joyful hearts.

Visionary leaders understand that how we worship will determine what we aspire to in our walk with and work for the Lord. And they will, like David, craft and lead worship in such a way as to shape the minds, revive the hearts, and refocus the daily lives of all those who join them in the presence of the living Christ.

For reflection or discussion

1. Suppose a visitor to your church were to ask you about the purpose of worship. What would you say? Which aspects of your church's worship point to or fulfill that purpose?
2. What does T. M. mean by saying that worship should take us "above and beyond"?
3. How can we tell when our worship is becoming too focused on us and our needs and not enough focused on God and His vision for us?
4. In what ways does your church's worship help you to gain a better vision of God and His will for your life?
5. Complete the following, then explain: "If there's one thing I'd like to see different in our worship, it would be..."

Next steps: Would you describe the worship in your church as "visionary"? Why or why not? Talk with a church leader about these questions.

Prayer:

7 Lessons for Church Leaders

*The Lord gave the word;
Great was the company of those who proclaimed it...* Psalm 68.11

The vision process

Church leaders who do not cast vision for the people entrusted to their care should either learn how to do this important work, or find something else to do.

It's that serious, friends.

Casting true and compelling vision is a primary duty of those who are called to leadership in the church. Jesus clearly demonstrated as much by His constant teaching and preaching about the Kingdom of God. But casting vision involves a process, a process involving certain components and objectives if that vision is to accomplish its work.

Vision that moves God's people to great and sacrificial works, that fills them with joy in the prospect and satisfaction in the doing, such vision comes from the Lord. It is revealed in His Word. Only God is sufficiently big, wise, and powerful to project a vision that can take us beyond ourselves into fuller and more abundant life in the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.

God gives the Word of vision to church leaders; their duty is to receive and understand that vision, and to proclaim it and enlist others in proclaiming it, until all God's people understand and own the vision and are pursuing it daily in everything they do.

Vision for the Church

Thus, church leaders must learn to cast vision. They could do no better than to reflect on David's work in this important calling.

Like David, they must discover God's vision *in His Word*, not in their own ideas about this, that, or the other. They must search the Scriptures together, prayerfully waiting on the Lord to make clear *His* vision for their church.

As visionary leaders begin to develop God's vision for their church, they must remember and return to God's works from the past, so that the work they propose for their congregation can be seen to be clearly in line with what God has done for His people in previous generations.

They must embrace large goals – goals that are befitting the God they serve, His greatness, majesty, power, beauty, holiness, justice, enormity, and love. They must make those goals visible to the imaginations of God's people and desirable to their hearts. They should search the Scriptures for God's vision for His Church and, bringing those ideas down to their own locality, spell them out in images, ideas, slogans, icons, and the like that will lead the people they serve to understand and embrace those goals.

Visionary leaders must show how *all* the gifts of *all* God's people contribute to the vision they are casting. Realizing a great vision, one that is befitting for and will exalt and glorify God, requires the gifts and time and treasure and talents of all God's people. It is the duty of visionary leaders to show every member of the Body of Christ where he may use his gifts, whether many or few, great or large, in realizing the Lord's vision for His Church.

This above all

Above all, visionary church leaders must work hard at casting the Biblical vision of God – of our Lord Jesus Christ, exalted in glory, building His Church, overpowering His foes, preparing a place for us, riding forth daily conquering and to conquer, and coming again in glory to take us to Himself.

God is working to transform His people into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3.12-18). When at last we see Him in glory, we will be like Him (1 Jn. 3.2, 3). His Church is His Body, and is also being shaped and built to refract His resurrection life into the world. We cannot aspire to be like Jesus, whether as individuals or a community of believers, unless visionary leaders take us into His presence in worship and teach us to see, with the eye of faith, all the beauty and wonder and glory and majesty and brilliance and power of our risen and reigning Lord and King.

Without vision there is no leadership, nowhere to go, nothing to aspire to, nothing to achieve. Without visionary leadership, like David, the visions we do pursue – and people are always in pursuit of some vision – will most likely emerge from our needs and wants, or our own best ideas about the church, leaving us in pursuit of the love of ourselves rather than of God and our neighbors.

Visionary, Kingdom-focused leaders are the great need of the churches in our day. Pray, friends, that God will raise up many visionary leaders who can take us more deeply into His Word and Kingdom than ever we have gone before.

For reflection or discussion

1. Do you agree that visionary leaders is the great need for churches today? Why or why not?
2. What would it take to develop more visionary leadership in your church?
3. How might you cultivate a clearer and more expansive vision of Christ and His Kingdom for your own walk with and work for the Lord?
4. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study?
5. How are you planning to put that lesson to work in your life?

Next steps: Download the PDF of this series on visionary leaders. Give a copy to each leader in your church. Ask them to read it, and tell them you'll get back with them to see how they respond.

Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.