

## VISIONARY OR STATIONARY

Today is the start of our month long Glocal Missions Conference. For the past few years our Global Outreach Team has been working to narrow our missions focus as a church. Focus is important. Over the next 5 weeks we will be looking at 5 different focus areas around the world that we as a church have chosen to concentrate our efforts towards. Today, our focus is on Quebec. It is good to have Terry, David and Sergei with us this morning. Last year I had the opportunity to visit Montreal with Steve Jones, the President of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada. He had asked if we as a church would be interested in partnering with church planting efforts in Quebec. I went with him to see for myself what was happening there.

I already knew that there were a lot of spiritual needs in the province of Quebec. It is one of the most underevangelized regions of North America. A 2008 poll found that only 6 percent of Quebec's 6 million Catholics attended weekly Mass, down 90 percent from the 1960s. About 7 percent of Quebecers are Protestant, and less than 1 percent identify themselves as evangelical.

What I did not know was how visionary and bold our Quebec churches were when it came to church planting. I had the opportunity to visit SEMBEQ, the Evangelical Baptist Seminary in Montreal where future leaders are being trained and taught the importance of church planting. I had the opportunity to visit of the church plants. One of the churches responsible for these church plants is the Evangelical Baptist Church of Terrebonne-Mascouche. Under the leadership of Pastor Louis Bourque, this church has been able to plant 6 daughter churches in the last 10 years. Pastor Louis recently released his role as Senior Pastor to one of his leaders, Pastor Matthew Giguere, so that he could concentrate his attention on this growing network of churches. When I met pastor Louis and Matthew and heard their heart and vision I knew that this was the church we needed to partner with. Their vision was amazing. I couldn't help thinking after I had met with them, what about Bramalea Baptist Church. Are we a visionary or stationary church? Today I want to talk about what it means to be a visionary church.

A young girl born in 1820 went blind at only six weeks of age when an unlicensed doctor treated her mild eye infection with a hot mustard home remedy permanently scarred her eyes. As she grew she was determined not to become bitter because of her condition and not to be confined by the chains of darkness. When she was only 8 years old she wrote:

Oh what a happy soul I am, although I cannot see; I am resolved that in this world contented I will be. How many blessings I enjoy, that other people don't; To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot, and I won't.

In time that girl became a mighty force for God through her hymns and Gospel songs. Her name was Fanny Crosby and her secret was to have the single mind of purpose, you look on your circumstances as God-given opportunities for the furtherance of the Gospel; and you rejoice at what God is doing to do instead of complaining about what God did not do. She wrote more than 8000 hymns, including songs we still sing today like Blessed Assurance, All the Way My Savior Leads Me and To God be the Glory. She once wrote: "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me." Although blind she was a woman of great vision. How about you? How is your vision?

Numbers 13: 26 They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan." 30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." 31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." 32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. 33 We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

Let me attempt to define two words for you this morning. The first word is VISIONARY. This means that your life is characterized by vision or foresight. The second word is STATIONARY which means unmoving or unchanging.

Which of these words best describe you and your approach to life? Would you say that you are a visionary person or a stationary person. How about this church? Would you say that we are a visionary or a stationary church?

In this passage that we read the children of Israel have just been released from captivity and are ready to enter into the promised land. They had travelled a long way and had been looking forward to this day. Their new home is just over the hill. The promise that God had made in the past was about to be fulfilled. To prepare for their advance Moses sends some scouts ahead and they return to give their report:

1. STATIONARY people – vs. 26-29, 31-33
- a. PESSIMISTIC – vs. 28a

The 12 scouts return from spying out the land carrying the fruit from the land. They had a cluster of grapes so large that it took two men to carry it on a pole between them along with pomegranates and figs. It was clear that it was a good land flowing with milk and honey. But notice the beginning of verse 28. It says BUT. That is the word that defines pessimistic people.

The optimist sees the doughnut - the pessimist sees the hole

In regions of Mexico hot springs and cold springs are found side by side, and because of the convenience of this natural phenomenon the women often bring their laundry, boil their clothes in the hot springs, and then rinse them in the cold springs. A tourist watching this procedure once commented to his Mexican guide, "They must think God is generous to provide so much free hot and cold water!" The guide replied, "No, señor, there is much grumbling because he does not supply any soap!"

- b. PHOBIC – vs. 28b

Stationary people are not only pessimistic but they are also phobic which means their life is governed by fear rather than by faith. While Joshua and Caleb saw the possibilities, the other 10 saw the problems. All they saw were the strong peoples and fortified cities.

Fear will paralyze us both in our personal lives, in our service for Christ, and in our Church life. We must not be a people controlled by fear, but people who are compelled by our faith in Jesus Christ !

A patient in a mental hospital was holding his ear close to the wall, listening intently. The attendant finally approached. "Sh!" whispered the patient, beckoning him over. The attendant pressed his ear to the wall for a long time. "I can't hear a thing," he finally said. "No," replied the patient, "it's been like that all day!"

c. POWERLESS – vs. 31

The 10 scouts said that “We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are”. In other words, they believed that Israel did not have the power to defeat them.

Yet they had the promise of the one who did that he would give them the land. Those who choose to remain stationary are powerless because they do not factor in the power of God. They had just seen God demonstrate that power. The pessimists, and unbelievers see giants, but those with faith see God ! Who are you focused on in your life ? Giants or God?

Two construction workers were eating lunch one day. One of them says, “I hope I don't have another meat loaf sandwich. I'm getting tired of meatloaf.” The next day the construction worker opens his sandwich for lunch and says, “Meatloaf sandwich again I hate this stuff!” The third day this guy opens his lunch and says “Oh meatloaf again! I'm getting tired of this every day.” The guy who's been eating lunch with him every day gets tired of hearing him complain and say, “hey man why don't you just get your wife to fix you a different kind of sandwich for lunch?” The first guys replies, “My wife? What are you talking about? I'm not married I make my own lunch.” Don't spend all your time complaining about what you are getting. You have the power to change it.

d. POLUTE the faith of others – vs. 32

It says that the 10 scouts began to spread a bad report about the land. Stationary people are not only a problem to themselves but their lack of faith can hinder the spiritual life and growth of others as well. It doesn't take a lot of stationary people to cause a whole community to stumble. Years later as Joshua looked back upon that day he summed it up when he said:

Joshua 14:8 my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear.

The unbelief of ten of the spies paralyzed the people. It produced fear in their hearts to the point that they would not advance and receive the promises of God. Their complaining soon rose to the point to where they were ready to appoint a captain over them to lead them back to Egypt. Because of this they came under judgment. Contract this to the faith of Joshua and Caleb.

2. VISIONARY people – vs. 30

a. They live committed to the PRINCIPLES of God

A visionary has at his very heart the vision of God, and his word. He is committed to the principles of God so he will always be in the advance mode. Caleb was a man who is said to have followed the Lord fully. He is referred to by the Lord as my servant !

Num 14:24 But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.

Caleb had a different Spirit in him. He lived his life by God's spirit. Joshua was like Caleb. It is said of him in Num 32:12 that he wholly followed the Lord.

When Hudson Taylor went to China, he made the voyage on a sailing vessel. As it neared the channel between the southern Malay Peninsula and the island of Sumatra, the missionary heard an urgent knock on his stateroom door. He opened it, and there stood the captain of the ship. "Mr. Taylor," he said, "we have no wind. We are drifting toward an island where the people are cannibals." "What can I do?" asked Taylor. "I understand that you believe in God. I want you to pray for wind." "All right, Captain, I will, but you must set the sail." "Why that's ridiculous! There's not even the slightest breeze. Besides, the sailors will think I'm crazy." But finally, because of Taylor's insistence, he agreed. Forty-five minutes later he returned and found the missionary still on his knees. "You can stop praying now," said the captain. "We've got more wind than we know what to do with!"

b. Their lives are controlled by the PRESENCE of God.

Caleb believed that the Lord was with Israel. He understood that it was the Lord's battle and not his own. Because of this he was sure that Israel would be victorious. When we understand that God is with us than we do not have to be afraid. E.g. father walking the child.

Num 14:8 If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

Joshua and Caleb were ready to go because they understood that God was ready to go with them.

There was a little boy who was caught in a fire at home. He could not get out of the burning house. He climbed up out onto the roof of the burning home, and began to cry for his father's help. The father looked up at his son from the ground, and told him to jump. "I can't see you though daddy, how will you catch me?" said the son. The father said, "I can see you". Without further hesitation the boy jumped into his father's arms. Sometimes we need to have that same type of pure faith that a child has in their parents in our Heavenly father.

c. They lay claim to the PROMISES of God

Caleb had heard the promises of God. There was a piece of land awaiting him with his name on it in the promised land, and he was determined to lay claim to it. A visionary perceives the promises of God, and is driven by them.

Josh 14:10 "Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! 11 I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to

battle now as I was then. 12 Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said." 13 Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. 14 So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly.

It would come 45 years later, but eventually Caleb would receive his mountain!

During an especially trying time in the work of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor wrote to his wife, "We have twenty-five cents—and all the promises of God!

Dad brought home what looked like mushrooms. Some in the family thought they were toadstools. Were they edible or not? Someone remembered seeing an article in the National Geographic magazine on mushrooms. They found the article which had pictures and descriptions of mushrooms and toadstools. Convinced they had mushrooms, they cooked and ate them—all because the magazine article said it was OK. That's faith! We need to put that kind of trust in God's Word. If we do, think of the blessings that flow our way.

d. They leave conquering to the POWER of God

What about the giants Caleb ? What about the enemies with the fortified cities ? The Lord will be with us, and will give it to us. Caleb was committed to following the Lord, and leaving the conquering up to him. Are we willing to do the same ? You know why we can't whip the giants in our lives ? Is it because God can't ? No, it's because we want let him. We want let him because we refuse to believe his word, and refuse to obey him.

A farmer decided to buy a chain saw? A logging foreman sold him one that he guaranteed would cut down 15 trees in a single day. A week later, a very unhappy farmer came back to report that the power saw must be faulty - it averaged only 3 trees a day. The foreman grabbed the saw, pulled the cord, and the saw promptly went "Bzzzzzzzz." "Hey" demanded the startled farmer, "what's that noise?" I wonder if we're kinda like that farmer, we just don't get it.... Can't see how faith works - all we can say is "hey what's that noise?"

3. This is a year of Possibilities

Of all that came out of Egypt none would set one foot inside the promised land except Joshua, Caleb, and those under 20 years of age. I wonder what we're forfeiting as a result of our unbelief? What are we losing out on because of our unwillingness to change ? What are we missing out on because we're just willing to sit back, and play it safe ? When we fail to catch the vision of God, and follow his will we are missing out on all that God has planned for us.

The difference between the stationary and the visionary is this. The stationary asks why ? While the visionary asks why not? Is there anything this coming year you could say why not to?

I have quoted this before, and I'll share it with you again. It is profound. Helen Keller was once asked what was worse than being blind. Her reply was.....It would be worse to see, and have no vision !

What happens with stationary water ? Does it not become stagnant ? Is the same not true of our lives? When we choose to remain stationary rather than visionary, we forfeit the blessings of God, and never

achieve all that God has for us. They died never experiencing what God has planned and prepared for them.

This morning I want to challenge you as individuals, and we as the church of the living God to become visionaries ! Let's not live in the past! Let's look beyond the giants, and see God! Let's use this next year to the fullest and follow God's call.

Remember it all depends on Him. Move when God tells you to move. If you miss this moment you may not get another chance.

Num 14:40 Early the next morning they went up toward the high hill country. "We have sinned," they said. "We will go up to the place the LORD promised." 41 But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the LORD's command? This will not succeed! 42 Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies, 43 for the Amalekites and Canaanites will face you there. Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword." 44 Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD's covenant moved from the camp. 45 Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah.

Faith honors God and God honors faith! A story from the life of missionaries Robert and Mary Moffat illustrates this truth. For 10 years this couple labored faithfully in Bechuanaland (now called Botswana) without one ray of encouragement to brighten their way. They could not report a single convert. Finally the directors of their mission board began to question the wisdom of continuing the work. The thought of leaving their post, however, brought great grief to this devoted couple, for they felt sure that God was in their labors, and that they would see people turn to Christ in due season. They stayed; and for a year or two longer, darkness reigned. Then one day a friend in England sent word to the Moffats that she wanted to mail them a gift and asked what they would like. Trusting that in time the Lord would bless their work, Mrs. Moffat replied, "Send us a communion set; I am sure it will soon be needed." God honored that dear woman's faith. The Holy Spirit moved upon the hearts of the villagers, and soon a little group of six converts was united to form the first Christian church in that land. The communion set from England was delayed in the mail; but on the very day before the first commemoration of the Lord's supper in Bechuanaland, the set arrived. Unknown.