

The Power of Hope in the Planning Process

Becoming a Person with a Plan

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One of the many marvelous phrases in the Scripture that describes the character of God is found in Romans chapter 15 where we read that he is the God of hope. Verse 13 of that chapter reads like this:

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹

Don't you love the fact that of all the phrases that could be used to describe our God, the one that rises to the top is that one, that he is the God of hope. And that, as a result, we can be filled with all joy. Hear that? Filled with all peace so that we will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And what an incredible juxtaposition of truths, huh? I mean, I am for all of that, aren't you? Every last bit of it.

Now if you know your Bible you may recall that hope is actually discussed earlier in that chapter as well, isn't it? Romans chapter 15 verse four.

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”²

That is one of the reasons we love our Bibles because it contains stories and principles that, as we study them, it potentially fills our hearts with hope.

So I think we would all agree. Those are two great verses from the Word of God, Romans 15:13 and Romans 15:4.

Now let me ask you this. Hope in what? And hope for what? See, hope without a basis and hope without a purpose is just an empty slogan at best. So what was Paul discussing in Romans 15 that caused him to emphasize this issue of hope so strongly? Well, here is the answer in that context. It was God's promise to bring Jews and Gentiles together in one body, the Church, hope that that could actually be accomplished. Well, that would be a monumental task, because you have Jewish men and women who have now trusted

¹ Romans 15:13.

² Romans 15:4.

Christ, but their background, obviously, was steeped in Legalism and law keeping and you are going to put them right next to Gentile men and women who had trusted Christ but didn't know anything about the Old Testament laws to the extra biblical ideas added by the rabbis and the teachers. I mean, how are you possibly going to bring that hot nest together into anything that would be unified or joyful?

Well, that is what Paul had been talking about in the previous chapter, developing the habit in the church of not judging one another. Here is just a small slice of what he had said.

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.³

Well, the skeptic would say, "Well, that is never going to happen. This is never going to work. It is hopeless to bring these two divergent groups, Jews and Gentiles together in the same body." Which is why Paul said, "No, it is anything but hopeless." Why? Because Paul knew—and he wanted the Roman Christians to know that God had already promised that it was going to happen, which is why in between this hope sandwich of Romans 15:4 and Romans 15:13, we read a series of quotes, promises from the Old Testament where Paul says:

Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME." Again he says, "REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE." And again, "PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM." Again Isaiah says, "THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE."⁴

Here is the point. The reason the Christians in Rome were to make specific plans—and this is a planning text—they were to make specific plans not to wrongly judge one another. The reason they could do that was because their hearts should be filled with hope that God had promised unity among them was truly achievable in and through his strength and grace, which raises a very important principle, friends. There is a direct relationship between aggressive, specific, visionary planning and a heart that is filled biblical hope. Or, stated another way, hopeful people plan well. Hopeful people plan consistently. Hopeful people plan in ways that others would consider to be practically outrageous, because they really believe they can take God at his Word.

³ Romans 14:4-5.

⁴ Romans 15:7-12.

With that in mind, I want to invite you to open your Bible this morning to 2 Samuel chapter seven. That is on page 231 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning.

Our theme this year is planning to grow. That is what this church is talking about Sunday after Sunday and from verses like Proverbs 21:5:

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”⁵

I like all that, don't you? Like to talk about planning. Like to talk about work. Like to talk about abundance. It is all right there in that verse.

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”⁶

Please tell me you like all that. You are all about all of that, I hope. And as we think about this from the perspective of our church, when you hear that theme, planning to grow, we are encouraging you to think along three particular trails in your mind. One, to continue to discuss, refine and implement our discipleship process. If we are going to talk about growth, it has got to start with us, spiritually. We are talking a lot about that this year. And then, secondly, organizing to launch our new cluster of ministries over at Faith West. We are planning to grow because we believe there is a lot of folks over there who don't yet know Jesus. We intend to reach them all. That would have been a good time for a yeah, I agree with that. That is a good plan. Our hearts ought to be filled with hope. Or is God's power only available on this side of the river, for crying out loud?

So organizing and launching our new cluster of ministries over at Faith West. And then, because this is a strategic planning year for our church we do this once every five years when we think about planning to grow, working together with the church family to develop our next five year strategic ministry plan together.

Now because of all that in our first quarter we are focusing specifically on becoming a person with a plan. It is not just talking about this as a church. I am talking about it as individuals. You have heard that phrase, he is a man with a plan. Well, I think all of Gods' people ought to plan, don't you? Absolutely. Thank you for agreeing.

So we are encouraging one another to develop specific plans in our personal lives and to take part in the planning process in our church and... You like the word and, don't you? And to drill down into the specific ministry or ministries God has given you and be planning. And then maybe even using these principles in you work or your business.

Now so far we have talked about four steps in this process, because it is a process. The first one is just being convinced about the value and the importance of planning which is why we started this whole series by studying the ant in Proverbs chapter six because

⁵ Proverbs 21:5.

⁶ Ibid.

some of God's people are lazy. That is just all there is to it. And so it is wise for us to consider the ant and seek to be like her, understand the value and the importance of planning. And then, secondly, to be committed to the goal of proper planning. Planning to what? Well, to become more like Christ, to be more honoring to him, to have lives of more effective stewardship. There has to be a goal of the plan. So, first, be motivated to do it. Secondly, have the right goal. Then, thirdly, identifying our priorities or our key effectiveness areas, our core values. And what are the categories of life in which I am going to be sure to be planning because I don't want to let that ball hit the ground. And then, last week, the fourth step, actually thinking through our strengths and our weaknesses in each of those areas, thinking Romans six, thinking Romans seven.

But now that is where that leaves us. Whether you have done this with a piece of paper or not, maybe just in your mind you will have to decide how you are going to apply all that we are talking about, but at least a series of frameworks in your mind. One is in your personal life. I hope you have thought through your core values and, I hope already, maybe on paper for many of you, maybe some just in your mind, you have started to think about some of your strengths in each one of those areas. And praise God for that, Romans six, who you are in Christ. But I hope you also had the authenticity in the last seven days to talk about some of the weaknesses. Not to be threatened about that, not to be wound up about that. Your identity is not in you anyway. Your identity is secure in Christ. That is what gives you the freedom to do some Romans seven stuff, to be honest about the ways that you need to get to a better place and even to ask some other people in your life for some help about identifying ways to get to a better place. And then do that exact same thing with us as a church. We are glad for the things that are right, but we have got a lot of things to get better at. And we don't need to be threatened about that. In fact, we are inviting criticism. We are inviting Roman seven, because we are secure in who we are in Christ anyway. And we understand that our perfection is not us. It is his righteousness. Therefore we are wide open to think about ways we need to get better.

I would encourage you to do the same thing in your specific ministry. And we have just used that one for... from the perspective of someone who teaches in our children's Sunday school around here. But you could line up your core values and whatever specific ministry God has given you. Praise God for the strengths, huh? Thank God for that. What, are you thinking about the weaknesses? Are you willing to do the Romans seven thing? And then if you wanted to you could even use that same philosophy in your work or your business.

Now I understand that this is a lot of work. Well, contrary to what some people are saying about the nature of sanctification these days, the Christian life involves work. It involves effort on your side of the equation. But I really do believe this, honestly, that if you are willing to take the steps that we have just talked about now the fun begins. Honestly, the fun now begins because now you can begin exploring your opportunities. There it is. You can begin dreaming. You can be thinking about a better day and I believe you are much more likely to do that if your heart is filled with hope, that God really can and God really will help you get to a better place. What are the opportunities before you to serve the Lord.

Here is the heart of a man who has that kind of hope, 2 Samuel beginning I chapter seven verse one.

Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your mind, for the LORD is with you."

But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in? "For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle. "Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"'" "Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. "I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. "I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.'"'" In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far? "And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future. And this is the custom of man, O Lord GOD. "Again what more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord GOD! "For

the sake of Your word, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness to let Your servant know. "For this reason You are great, O Lord GOD; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. "And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, from nations and their gods? "For You have established for Yourself Your people Israel as Your own people forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God.⁷

Don't you love that passage of Scripture? We are talking this morning about the power of hope in the planning process and this marvelous example in the Word of God. Let's look for three principles to help us explore future opportunities with God sized vision.

See, you have talked about your strengths. You have talked about your weaknesses. You did Romans six. You did Romans seven. Now what? Now it is time to have fun. Now it is time to dream. Now it is time to look at those strengths and look at those weaknesses with hearts that are filled with hope and ask: What is the opportunity to honor God's name?

Three principles to help us explore future opportunities with God sized vision. First of all, I really believe this. It honors the Lord to dream about ways his words can be fulfilled in your life. You realize the verses we just read are a treasure chest of David synthesizing key promises that the Lord has made throughout history to his people. It is all about the Word. In fact, you ask the average Bible teacher to list the 10 most important chapters in the Old Testament it is highly likely that 2 Samuel would be on that list because we find here the Davidic covenant, which obviously points to our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ in just a myriad of ways. But it is also important because as you heard David speak you see vestiges of previous biblical promises that had been made to people like Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Moses. And David wanted to be part of seeing those promises come true. So when the Lord gives him rest from his enemies, what is he thinking about? What is he dreaming about? What is going through his heart and mind?

And you might want to ask yourself. What have you been thinking about and what have you been dreaming about in the last week? Well, here is David and that God has now given him rest from his enemies and here is what is going through his mind. I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains. I want to build a house for God. Don't you love that? If you are going to dream about a project, you might as well dream about a big one, huh?

And nobody is suggesting by the way, that David was a perfect man. In fact, we are just a few chapters away from his tragic fall. But even after that the New Testament still describes David as a man after what? God's own heart. And I really believe this particular passage which says something about that heart being filled with hope and

⁷ 2 Samuel 7:1-24.

looking of opportunities, I think that gives us insight into why the New Testament would say that.

Now here is the point. What motivated David to contemplate such an important opportunity? What motivated David to even consider such an incredible initiative? I believe it is because his heart was filled with hope, that God had promised to bless their nation and, in turn, allowed them to be a blessing to every other nation on earth and, perhaps, God's purpose could be furthered through the construction of a magnificent temple in which his glory could permanent reside and his presence could guide God's people forever. And we know from God's response and subsequent biblical history that even though Nathan thought it was a really great idea, that God disagreed because David was a man of war. And so the Lord, instead, would use his son Solomon to construct this temple. But because his heart explored opportunities like this—that is the key—God made this life changing promise to him as a result.

Friends, I believe it honors the Lord to dream about ways his Word can be fulfilled in your life. And as you think about your strengths, look, then, for opportunities to build on them in order to glorify him further as you think, Romans seven, about your weaknesses. Don't just be stuck in that. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. We are not talking about dogs. We are not talking about tricks. And I hope you will look at your weaknesses and say, "I am dreaming about a better day because God has promised that I can get to a better place. And I don't have to be stuck."

So what about your personal life? Well, what about as you are thinking about your personal growth plan and you have identified your core values, whatever they might be and however they might have to be adjusted in this particular chart. Had you been honest and thankful about your strengths, praise God, but you have also been honest and authentic about your weaknesses. You are not afraid of Romans seven because you are rejoicing in Romans six. What are you going to do about that?

And I would just ask you. What does your propensity to make specific plans in your personal life about ways to get better say about the level of hope you have that God can and God will actually keep his promises to you? What I am asking you, really, is, how David like are you plans?

Here is a couple of ways I am seeing this working out among our church family right now. You know that I frequently say to persons if you don't know that you know that you are on you way to heaven, we want to talk to you. You can name the time. You can name the place. You can name the person and we will drop just about anything to talk with you if you are not sure that you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And the good news is there is an incredible number of people who are taking us up on that right now.

Well, what would cause them to do that? Because that is hard. Because they have to acknowledge, listen, I don't have a relationship with the Lord yet. I am not sure I am on my way to heaven. There might be some things about this I don't understand. I might even be mad at God. There may be things about my life that I have really messed up.

What is it that would motivate a person to take us up on that request? It is dreaming. It is saying, "I have a heart of hope at least that maybe God can get me to the place where I could know for sure that I am on my way to heaven." And when a person has that kind of a glimmer of hope in their heart, they are willing to make a plan. I am going to pick up the phone. I am going to send an email. And as a result, we have been having some just delightful conversation with me and women who are considering the claims of Christ. That is David like faith. I am looking for the opportunity, even if the opportunity begins with: I don't yet know the Lord.

Or I have been saying this year several times, obviously I say it all the time, but I think we have emphasized it more the last couple of weeks when we are talking about planning to grow to married people. Listen, if your marriage is I am stuck in some way, not necessarily in the sense that it is completely shot, but if you are stuck in some way, why not open up and get some help? We are having a record number of people take me up on that. And we are wrestling right now. We are scrambling a bit to be sure that we have all the resources in place to help people who are saying we want to sit down with someone and talk about ways to get our marriage to a better place.

And we are not talking about people who are going to sit down with somebody who says, "Well I have got everything all together." No, we are talking about doing it shoulder to shoulder, kind of like this verse, Zephaniah 3:9.

"For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder."⁸

That is what we are talking about in counseling anyway. We are just talking about shoulder to shoulder growing together. Some men and women have said in their mind's eye, "I can picture me being a more godly husband and because of the promises in the Bible about helping me grow, I am going to seize that opportunity to get some help. Or I can picture being a more godly parent. And right now we are stuck. But as I think about planning to grow and what that means, I want to have a David like plan. And, yeah, I don't like to acknowledge the fact that I don't have it all together, but everybody knows. So I might as well acknowledge it and I might as well get some help."

That is one of the take always here as you think about your strengths that you can build on or your weaknesses that need to be shored up. What specific steps could you plan? And what specific steps would you plan if your heart was truly filled with hope? God wants to help you get to a better place in each one of those key effectiveness areas. What does it really mean when Paul says, "I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ?"

And with the pace and the aggressiveness and specificity with which you plan be increased if you really had hope in your heart that God truly could fulfill that promise in your life.

⁸ Zephaniah 3:9.

What about in our church? What about as we think about our strengths and we think about our weaknesses? And we talked a lot last week from Romans chapter seven about whether God was going to give us the authenticity as a congregation to invite criticism from our community, to invite criticism from ourselves, to talk about ways we just need to get to a better place. And then as we think about that honestly, are we going to make some David like plans? I want to get to a better place. There is an opportunity to do something for God. We are going to take God. We are not going to be satisfied where we are. Cry out loud. We are going to be thankful for what we have and we are going to seek to get to a better place, to dream about the opportunities that exist to serve our Lord.

Starting this evening we have the privilege of hosting over 1700 persons for a biblical counseling training conference. That is an incredible honor, an incredible opportunity to hopefully be a blessing to many churches and mission fields that will be represented here. I mean just think about the math. If everyone of those attendees eventually impacts 100 other persons, think about the opportunity to have a impact for God. Well, how did that come to be. And where did this whole conference thing and the philosophy of ministry on which it is based, where did it come from humanly speaking?

Well, it really is the culmination of three different strands of David like dreaming. Do you know that? It started humanly speaking right there. I love that picture of pastor and Mrs. Good. Pastor Good was serving in Gary in the late 60s and early 70s and there was a fascinating trend in fundamental circles at that time known as bus ministries. And churches were just falling all over themselves to see how many busses they could buy and how many neighborhood children they could bus in to inflate their attendance numbers. And that was especially prevalent in the northwest Indiana area and I will just leave that alone, but on the one hand the desire to do outreach, that was commendable. But the way it was being done required more adults to be out of their Sunday school classes, out of their worship services to essentially babysit other people's children, very little attention or success in reaching the parents and so churches are getting larger numerically, but weaker spiritually all the time.

Pastor Good and Mrs. Good are right in the middle of that. Yet seeing what the Scripture promised, there it is, that is where the hope resided, of the possibility of building strong, growing followers of Christ and they wanted to take God at his Word that that could actually be done. At that same time there were some leaders in their church whose families were falling apart. And the dominant approach in that time was, well, you just keep reaching people, winning people, blah, blah, blah, and then when somebody inside the church has trouble you either go reach somebody else or you send the person who is in trouble down to someone who has been trained in secular theories. Pastor Good actually tried to pursue some of that kind of secular psychology training and found so much of it to be incompatible with what the Bible teaches about the nature of man and the nature of God and the nature of sin and the nature of redemption. And it was at that point that he received training in biblical counseling and he and Mrs. Good saw that as a way to reach and disciple people and they began dreaming of an approach to ministry that would be consistent with the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture and the principles of

biblical progressive sanctification that was flowing out of hearts filled with hope that God could be taken at his word. They dreamed about that.

About that same time God was working in the lives of somebody else, Bob and Leona Smith. Doc was a medical doctor who had been raised in a pastor's home, was beginning his medical practice. He and Leona were faithfully serving up in their church and doc had actually done a psychiatry rotation as part of his medical school training. He had a lot of trouble reconciling what he was being taught in that psychiatric training round with everything else that was based on the scientific method. And he jumps into his pack or his practice and he sees Christians who said they were followers of Christ, but when they were sick or when they were faced with a life threatening illness God would say would many times not handle it a whole lot differently than those who did not know the Lord. That is when he received biblical counseling training and started a dream about a holistic approach to the trials of life that could actually take God at his Word and helping himself and others do the same.

Then there was this church, relatively young at the time, and, frankly, we had had some good days and some that weren't so good. And we, too, had been heavily involved in that whole bus ministry thing. Did you know that? Yeah, we did. We had a ton of them. We even had a TV ministry for a little while. Did you know that? That is true. But, as one of the leaders said at the time, they were a mile wide and an inch deep.

But there were some people who were part of that congregation who are still part of this congregation to this day in many cases who had a dream of an approach to church ministry that was more concerned with the depth of the ministry than the breadth. God in his sovereignty brought those three David like dreams together. And, as a result, the counseling ministry was launched here to be a blessing to people in our town and also a strengthening impact to people inside our church. And people who had a very unusual period of time in the fundamental churches history dared to dream based on the hope that God's Word is truly sufficient and that it contains a practical, understandable process of growth that could be implemented church wide in a way that strong lives and strong families and ultimately a strong church could be built. And, friends, God was honored by that dream. That was a David sized dream. We are not going to be satisfied with the way things are today. We are going to seize opportunities based on the promises that God has made to us in his Word.

People are literally coming from around the world not to see us, but to see God keeping his Word and honoring his Son. And that is why we are so motivated to do the exact same thing in our generation.

I want to encourage you to do the exact same thing in your specific ministry, however you are serving God right now. I hope you will go through the exact same process. What are the opportunities? And don't be afraid to dream big, because God is a big God.

You may decide to do the exact same thing in your work and your business, absolutely. David's desire to build God a temple and the Lord's subsequent response proved that it honors the Lord to dream about ways his Word can be fulfilled in your life.

Now you might say, "Well, there is a problem with all that." Did you realize David didn't get to build the temple? True. Which proves this, I think, frequently God blesses your dreams in ways you would have never expected.

I realize we are not used to thinking in terms of covenants and thrones and so God's response might not impact us the way it did David, but here is the bottom line. This is the greatest news God could have ever given to David. This is the best gift imaginable. That is why David says later in that text:

"Now therefore, may it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord GOD, have spoken; and with Your blessing may the house of Your servant be blessed forever."⁹

The point is David would have never expected to receive the Davidic covenant when he began this conversation and many times God is honored by your willingness to look for opportunities to get to a better place and he may, I turn, bless you in ways, use you in ways that you would have never dared dream in advance. Think about that for people like you and me. Would we have equal reason to look around for ministry opportunities today believing that God can do similar things in and through us if he chooses to? Is God done with his Church? Is God done with you? I hope not. I hope you agree with this. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong. Do you believe that? God is looking for people who will trust him. God is looking for people who will not be satisfied with the status of their weaknesses. God is looking for people who say, "I want to get to a better place."

It is possible that God could bless you in ways that you would have never believed. That is why, again, as you think about your specific ministry, look for opportunities. Don't be afraid to dream. And don't be surprised if God doesn't turn around and bless you in ways you would have never believed.

I have talked to you about the opportunity to teach children, because we are at a place right now in our church growth we have more people coming than ever before meaning we have more children coming than ever before. Great. And you say, "I am not sure I could do that, just a little group." Who knows how God could use you. Do not underestimate the power of your God to use you as you walk by faith in him.

I was given that opportunity when I was in Bible college. There was a church who was in financial trouble. They couldn't afford a pastor. One of our professors went to be their pastor on an interim basis. They didn't have any money for a youth group, had a little group of kids. Said, hey, would you be willing to do that?

⁹ 2 Samuel 7:29.

And so I took that on. I said, “That would be a great Christian service opportunity,” but how much trouble could you have with like five kids? Here is how much trouble you can get in to. You start ministering to the five kids and they start telling all their friends. And pretty soon more and more kids are saved and more and more kids are coming and the room is getting bigger and bigger and bigger. I didn’t have a bus in those days. I had my car. After youth group we would stuff kids in my car every which way. I am so glad we didn’t get in a wreck, but it just amazing the way God blessed those particular efforts in ways I would have never believed. And haven't we seen that happen over and over? That is what happened with David. He offers to do something for God. He ends up received the Davidic covenant. We have seen that happen around here over and over and over. We dream. We try. We plan. We look for opportunities and God, bam, blesses us in ways we would have never believed. Is it hard for us to prove that?

We are building the community center, trying to reach our town for Christ and, bam, God gives us a gift completely out of the blue to build vision of hope. Aren’t you glad for that opportunity to serve the community? Did anybody see that coming? No. Just like David didn’t see the Davidic covenant coming. We were going to build that little thing over in West Lafayette on a little piece of ground, remember that. This was going to be a little thing. We are getting it done. Bam out. God closed that door, but gave us an opportunity to buy another piece of property a little bigger. We are on that one. God closed that door and, bam, now, Faith West. And we are going to have opportunities to sere God like never before and there is vey few people in this church if any who would have believed that on the front end.

And I am simply saying what God has done for our church family over and over and over has blessed us I ways we would have never understood on the front end. Look for opportunities and then don’t be surprised when he gives you a bonus. Like that one, that house. Safe Haven is going to be dedicated right next to Vision of Hope I a couple of weeks, a home that is available for people in our community struggling with fire, flood or domestic violence, paid for by the Japanese automobile plant down the road. Nobody saw that coming. I am simply suggesting that if we trust God as we look for opportunities, who knows how he might choose to bless us.

One last principle. Dreams that honor the Lord can be a great blessing to future generations. You may have noticed this as we were talking or reading that about David. What especially impacted David was the fact that this was going to be a blessing forever. Did you notice that in the text? May the house of your servant David be established before you, may it be established forever, confirm it forever? And I believe many times as you live in a visionary way for God it doesn't just impact you. It impacts those who come after you. And, by the way, can God keep his Word about establishing something forever?

Remember Christmas?

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was

Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."¹⁰

That is one of the things I love about serving God. You can have an impact that is going to last and make a difference for all eternity. What about people like us? Here is what I hope. I hope our kids and our grand kids sit around some day and say, "Our parents are nuts. They are crazy the way they serve God. They were crazy the way they believed God. They were crazy the way they dreamed, which is why we want to be crazy for God in our generation."

I believe this. You say, "Well, my kid might not be able to get some sneakers if we are so busy serving God like that." Fine. Your kid doesn't need another pair of 100 dollar sneakers. Your kid needs to see parents who believe God, who love God, who are looking for opportunities to serve God.

I don't use these all the time, but I saw this on Facebook today or this week. It made me laugh. Mom saying to her little kitty, "I am sorry you are made because you just found out the world doesn't revolve around you. Here let me pour you a tall glass of get over it."

And I really believe this. Our kids are looking for a cause to follow. I believe that. And we can either give them one through the way we are visionary in the way we plan and execute or they will find one themselves.

I mentioned that youth group. There is a picture of that youth group from Trenton, New Jersey at a retreat we took down in the shore. That is one of the interesting things about Facebook. I am now Facebook friends with a lot of the kids that were in my youth group 30 years ago.

Do you know what many of them are doing today? Serving God in their churches in youth ministry. I will tell you. I am so glad every time I see one of those posts. Friends, we have every reason in the world to do David like dreaming.

¹⁰ Luke 1:26-33.