

1. In the book of Proverbs chapter 29, there is a verse of scripture that you may have heard quoted, or even quoted yourself.
2. The KJV says... **Proverbs 29:18** Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.
3. The NIV says... **Proverbs 29:18** Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.
4. The Message Bible makes much clearer the meaning of this verse. **Proverbs 29:18** If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.
5. As human beings, made in the image of God. As believers in Jesus Christ, striving to live for him, and as the church, the body of Christ, there is this great need for vision. There is this great need for revelation. For it to be revealed to us what God is doing.
6. The writer of proverbs states that when there is no vision, or revelation of what God is doing that people perish, cast off restraint (or do whatever they want), and they stumble all over themselves.
7. But we must know that it is not God's desire that we perish and struggle and stumble all over the place.
8. We serve a God who chooses to reveal himself to us.
9. As a church, as the shepherd of this church family, in cooperation with the leadership teams of BFA, I want to share some vision with you.
10. I want to reveal what we as pastor, as a staff, and as deacons believe God is doing in this time.
11. Specifically, what God is doing as it relates to how we respond to the effects that Covid-19 is having on us as a church family.
12. In mid-May, when we resumed on-site and in-person services, there was a thought process and a planning process that we were working from.
13. Our goal was to little by little, one step at a time, re-open the various ministries of BFA so that we could eventually come back to some semblance of normal.
14. We anticipated that normal would look somewhat different than it did pre Covid-19, but yet the goal was to move toward something that looked and felt like what church life was before.

15. As I describe these next few steps, please understand that what I mention is not meant to induce guilt. This is not about a guilt trip. This is simply about judging the realities of our situation as clearly as possible and not burying our heads in the sand.
16. We began by opening a particular ministry, but quickly realized that the vast majority of the people who served in that ministry pre Covid-19, did not wish to continue serving.
17. We felt this ministry was pretty essential for families to begin attending again. But quickly learned that not only did we not have volunteers, we saw very few people utilize this ministry.
18. Out of that we took about 5 weeks and we highlighted and talked about serving in ministry at BFA.
19. We gave everyone who was here in person and watching online the opportunity to express interest in serving by filling out a simple form, and answering a few questions.
20. During those five weeks and since that emphasis, we have had zero people express interest in serving.
21. We began opening a few more ministries, but again ran into the need for volunteers.
22. While we were not making progress in recruiting volunteers, all during this time our attendance began to grow on Sunday mornings. For several weeks we had to bring extra chairs into the gym.
23. Kids church upstairs was re-launched, and they too began to grow and see good things happen.
24. Then in the first part of September, we experienced our first positive Covid case.
25. The very next Sunday our attendance was cut in half.
26. Prior to the positive case, they had as many as 20 kids in kid's church. The Sunday after there were zero kids in kid's church.
27. Since then, in our area and even in our church, positive cases have increased. Exposure to the virus has increased. The need for multiple people each week to quarantine and miss church has increased as well.

28. Basically, whatever movement we were making toward “normal” was stopped in its tracks.
29. So that caused our ministry teams, the staff, the deacons, and myself to ask some questions. The most important questing being this.
30. How can we approach or do ministry in such a way that 1 positive case doesn't stop nearly everything we are doing in its tracks?
31. How can we move forward in such uncertain times when we don't know day to day the affects that a pandemic is going to have on our lives?
32. A couple of answers came out of asking those questions.
- It is pretty useless to struggle and push and try and do the same things we were doing before, when it is clear that is not working.
 - So that means we are going to have to adjust. We are going to have to do things differently. We are going to have to take a different approach.
33. Now, let me be clear, I don't like those answers.
34. I like routine. I like stability. I like getting into a pattern and making it work. I don't like different.
35. But either we adjust and move forward, or we stay the same and die. I chose to adjust and move forward.
36. What's interesting is that this is no where near the first time in history that God's people have needed to adjust. To take a different approach.
37. And though I could give you dozens of examples of how that has transpired throughout the generations, I would like to highlight one example that may have not crossed your radar.
38. It has to do with the early church and the days after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
39. The outflow of one of the most exciting events in the history of the church was momentum and growth.
40. Luke the writer of the book of Acts had this to say about the believers who made up the early church.

41. Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
42. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit caused them to enter into a pattern, or a way of doing ministry. There were basically three things that were of high value to them.
43. They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, they fellowshiped and broke bread together, and they prayed.
44. And they carried out those activities in two distinct places.
45. In the temple courts (at church if you will), and in their homes.
46. And the result of this pattern and God's blessing was that they had glad and sincere hearts, they praise God because they were happy and content, people outside the church thought highly of them, and as a result people were being saved and added to the kingdom on a daily basis.
47. Life was good for these early believers. They were on a roll. They were experiencing momentum. But the good times didn't last.
48. Move forward to Acts chapter 4 and things change dramatically.
49. Peter and John are arrested for preaching at the temple that Jesus is Lord.
50. They were arrested. They were threatened. And they were told that they better stop spreading the news of Jesus or things would become much worse for them.
51. They ignore the threats, miracles are done, but not without further consequences.
52. In Acts chapter 5 all twelve of the apostles were arrested and put in jail.
53. Not long after that, one of the first deacons, a man by the name of Stephen was stoned to death because of his faith in Jesus.

54. The early church was persecuted. And one of the results of this persecution is that it dramatically changed how comfortable people were at meeting together in a large group setting.
55. Does that sound familiar?
56. So, remember. In Acts 2, the apostles along with many believers would meet regularly in the temple courts and worship the Lord.
57. But when the persecution began to take hold, look at what happened to that public gathering.
58. Acts 5:12-14 The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.
59. All the believers used to meet, but now according to verse 12, only the apostles are meeting at the temple.
60. Verse 13 says that no one else dared to join them. Why? Because of the threat of persecution.
61. So, what we see is that this public gathering. This larger worship service if you will, changed drastically. It no longer was the major draw it had been.
62. But notice what doesn't change. Verse 14 says that nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.
63. So, in spite of this drastic change in how they met together, God continued to do amazing thing and people were saved.
64. What we find is that the affects of the persecution on their public gatherings didn't limit God one bit. God was still able to do what God was able to do.
65. But what we see is that God did great things, he just didn't do them in the same was as he had before. Things were different.
66. And the key is that the believers adjusted to those differences, and they believed the Lord to continue to work.
67. How did they adjust? Acts 5:42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

68. The apostles were still going to the temple courts, but where were the believers being ministered to? They were being ministered to from house to house. In their homes.
69. So, the early church adjusted how they did things so they could continue to be effective.
70. Allow me if you will, to apply that message to us here in 2020.
71. Covid-19 has greatly affected our public worship services.
72. For various reasons, health concerns, for protection, whatever the case may be, public gatherings don't look and feel the same.
73. Our interactions with other believers has changed. We are being encouraged to social distance. I'm sure you've noticed that one of the affects of social distancing is that you feel, well.... distant from others.
74. But that doesn't mean we need to lay down and cry about our current situation.
75. I believe the answer. What the Lord is doing. The vision that he wants us to see is that if we will make some adjustments, the Lord can continue to work, and good things can continue to happen.
76. So, what does that mean for us. We need to continue to do public worship gatherings, but we also need to place greater emphasis on the house to house aspect of church life.
77. But pastor, how do we do that when going from house to house may not be wise right now?
78. We do that through the wonders of technology. We use the tool of technology to bridge the gap.
79. Our response to Covid-19 is Network-19. (pass out sheets)
80. While Covid serves to separate us, through some adjustment, we can re-connect and stay stronger together.
81. So, let me tell you about Network-19.
82. **The purpose** of Network-19 is to connect and encourage.
83. **The mission** of Network-19 is to make sure that every person associated with BFA is *intentionally* connected to other believers and is encouraged.
84. **The plan** of Network-19 is to use whatever means necessary (phone, text, video call, media, etc.) to carry out the mission.

85. I realize that that is a pretty basic description. It is basic on purpose. One of our goals from the beginning has been to make Network-19 as simple as possible.
86. I have told everyone from the start. If it's complicated, throw it out the window. We don't need more complication in our world. We need simple.
87. So how do we carry out this simple plan? We do it with the help of Joshuas and Hannahs.
88. **Who are Joshuas and Hannahs?**
89. Joshua was a young man who assisted the leader of the children of Israel Moses. Then when Moses died, Joshua became the leader of the nation.
90. And as they were standing on the edge of some major adjustments to their daily lives, Joshua had this to say to the people.
91. **Joshua 1:9** Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."
92. Joshua chose to purposefully draw together and encourage the nation of Israel so they could be effective at what God had called them to do.
93. Hannah was a wife who felt cut off from her family and from the blessing of God because she had no child.
94. She was discouraged. But she took that discouragement to the Lord. She trusted the Lord.
95. And when the Lord gave her direction she became encouraged, and she interacted with others in a more positive way.
96. **1 Samuel 1:18** She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.
97. To put it simply, Joshuas and Hannahs are connectors and encouragers.
98. So, let me tell you what we need. We need you to consider being a Joshua or a Hannah.
99. **What are the roles of Joshuas and Hannahs?** (other side)
100. We need Joshuas and Hannahs to commit to connect and encourage 4-5 people on a weekly basis. Not 55 or 45. Not 25 or even 12. But 4-5 people.

101. Establish basic weekly communication with your 4 or 5 and be a source of encouragement to them. Just relate.
102. Adjust communication to the needs of the group. (text, call, zoom call)
103. Receive training on various methods to connect and encourage. You will not be alone. We will provide help.
104. Understand that in person connection is NOT necessary. That means no one, even those who aren't attending right now are disqualified. Anyone and everyone can be a Joshua or Hannah.
105. I believe anyone and everyone can connect and encourage 4-5 people on a weekly basis.
106. To illustrate that there are no barriers to you serving in this way. That anyone can be used, I would like to introduce you to the director of Network-19. (picture)
107. Champ Hawkins, because of health battles and concerns, has not been to a live and in-person service since early in the month of March.
108. When we first started talking about him leading this ministry, Champ confided that he was hesitant.
109. He said, I love BFA and the ministry of BFA. But I feel so cut off and disconnected. Can this even work.
110. And after some prayer and consideration, Champ believes and so do I that it will work.
111. So, Champ has agreed to lead and direct this ministry remotely. He doesn't know when he will be back in person. But he's not letting that be a barrier to him being used by the Lord.

Conclusion:

1. Are we facing challenges right now? You better believe we are.
2. Every person I know has more challenges than they know what to do with.
3. But will you believe with me that what challenges us is not a challenge to God.
4. If the early church can adjust to persecution and God can still do great things, we can adjust to Covid-19 and believe God is great enough to build his church.

5. I want to lead you in a response this morning.
6. Will you join me now in praising the Lord that our God is not limited in what he can do.
7. Praise him that he is the source of all that is good.
8. As individuals helps us to not resist what the Lord is up to in our lives.
9. Help us embrace the adjustments the Lord is trying to bring about in our lives.
10. Ask the Lord if he would use you to be a Joshua or Hannah.
11. Lord, use us to see people added to our numbers daily those who are being saved.