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DEVELOPING AND CASTING A GREAT COMMISSION VISION  
AT VANN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH,  
EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

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A Project  
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the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Eric David Martin  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING AND CASTING A GREAT COMMISSION VISION

AT VANN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH,

EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

Eric David Martin

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Travis S. Kerns (Faculty Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adam W. Greenway

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Chastity,  
my partner in life, love, and ministry.

To Joel and Corban,  
God's richest blessings.

And to C. E. Turpin,  
a true friend I can count on.

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## PREFACE

It is only appropriate that I begin this project with an acknowledgment of many who have helped me along the way. Although words cannot fully express how grateful I am for the men and women who have poured into my life with patience and love, encouraging me through each step that has led to the completion of this project, I would be remiss if I did not recognize their labors. I am thankful for Bobby and Renee McGuyer: they have been faithful prayer partners along the way, lavishing support and encouragement that gave me the resolution to keep going. I am also grateful for Jeff Walters, who with great patience and a gentle spirit guided me through the early stages of the project. And, to Travis Kerns, my faculty supervisor, who with great haste provided needed critique and helpful suggestions. Additionally, I am thankful for C. E. Turpin, who spent countless hours reading and editing my work.

I would also like to thank the good folks at Vann Avenue Baptist Church. Without their cooperation and willingness to follow my leadership, this project would not have been possible. I especially want to thank the sixteen persons who participated in the vision team. They served faithfully, by providing helpful feedback with willing hearts. I am also thankful for the Vann Avenue staff, who willingly took on more responsibility to allow me the time to write.

There are no adequate words to express my gratitude to my helpmate and partner in life, Chastity. She has been willing to sacrifice at every turn, making my goals her goals. She has always believed in me, and her support has given me the courage and strength to keep going. I love her more today than ever before, and I look forward to facing the challenges and celebrations together in the years ahead.



Finally, let me mention that without God this project would have been impossible! I am thankful for God's sustaining grace in my life. I am indebted that in Christ, even though I was once far off, I have been brought near by the blood the Messiah (Eph 2:13). I am always reminded that it is by grace I am created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph 2:8-10). To God be the glory!

Eric David Martin

Evansville, Indiana

May 2013

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to unite and empower the members of Vann Avenue Baptist Church in Evansville, Indiana, to be more effective in reaching and discipling the unchurched. This purpose was accomplished by developing and casting a Great Commission vision.

#### **Goals**

Four strategic goals aided in evaluating the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to discover the core values of Vann Avenue Baptist Church (VABC). Having a list of Vann Avenue's core values helped to provide a clear understanding of who we are and why we do, or do not do, what we do. Understanding Vann Avenue's core values also provided direction as we determined what we should do in order to fulfill the Great Commission in southeast Evansville.

The second goal was to identify the purpose for which VABC exists. Throughout Vann Avenue's sixty-year history, ministry has generally been understood to be the responsibility of the paid minister and there has been an ignorance of the scriptural principle that every member is a minister and has a place of service. A clearly defined purpose served in igniting a passion for Great Commission ministries by developing a vision that both fueled excitement and led to the discovery of each member's unique place in fulfilling the vision.

The third goal was to strengthen VABC's community outreach by connecting

the felt needs of southeast Evansville to the ministry gifts of the member's at Vann Avenue. In order for this goal to be realized the members had to discover the felt needs of southeast Evansville. Our church is responsible for the community in which we are located. To reach and disciple the people in our community we must know who they are and what needs they may have. A survey of local businesses, schools, and other servants of the city became a starting point in this process, and provided the basis for ministry opportunities that are relevant to the community.

The greatest earthly resource for fulfilling the Great Commission is people. VABC had to discover that it was equipped to meet the needs of the surrounding community. The goal of strengthening community outreach was accomplished by connecting the gifts of the church to the needs discovered through the community survey. Connecting the gifts of the church with the needs of the community revealed many opportunities to serve in Great Commission outreach and discipleship ministries. God has uniquely gifted the body of Christ to do the work of the ministry. It is the thesis of this project that one of the primary reasons church members are not involved in ministry is that they do not have a clear vision that includes their unique God-given gifts for ministry. Bob Roberts, Jr. writes,

When the church glocalizes, it acts as a connection center between believers and all of society's domains. It focuses on training the people in the pew how to view their vocation as their 'Jerusalem' in terms of ministry. From there, it motivates them toward how they can use that vocation to intersect a domain locally—and globally—throughout the ends of the earth!<sup>1</sup>

The fourth goal is a personal one. I hope to become a more effective leader by learning how to develop and cast a compelling Great Commission vision in an established church. One of the major roles as a pastor is to develop and communicate a

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<sup>1</sup>Bob Roberts, Jr., *Glocalization: How Followers of Jesus Engage a Flat World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 41.

vision that paints a picture of what the church could be. Doing so strengthened my ability to lead the church to be outwardly focused, and resulted in greater glory to Christ through Kingdom growth.

### **Ministry Context**

Vann Avenue Baptist Church began as a mission of Calvary Baptist Church in Evansville, Indiana, on July 31, 1949. The mission was eventually constituted as a New Testament church with thirty-eight charter members. Now, some sixty years later, VABC has completed three major building campaigns resulting in an education building, a new sanctuary, and a gymnasium. VABC is somewhat unique when it comes to pastoral tenure. VABC has had only five pastors (including myself) since constituting in 1949. The previous pastor held an unusually long tenure. He served as pastor for the majority of the time since VABC constituted and retired on his 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The pastor is not the only member of Vann Avenue's staff with an unusually long tenure. The current worship pastor has served the church for twenty years. In addition, the current secretary has been serving the church for the past eighteen years. Due to the physical illness and subsequent retirement of the former pastor, I was called to serve VABC as senior pastor in May of 2009.

As far as context, Vann Avenue is situated in the southeastern heart of Evansville, Indiana. Approximately 100,000 people live within a five-mile radius of VABC, and 55,883 live within a three mile radius. The population is projected to decrease 2.3 percent by the year 2014. According to Percept, the population in the immediate church field (within 3 miles of the church facilities), is highly diverse. Their 2010 survey of the area reports that "middle American Families . . . [are] 32.5% of the

households in the area of southeast Evansville. The top individual segment is Established Empty-Nesters representing 13.8 percent of all households.”<sup>2</sup> The average age within the three-mile radius is 37.3 with an average household income of \$48,366 per year.<sup>3</sup> The following paragraphs will demonstrate how effective VABC has been at reaching her community.

Vann’s Growth Pattern for 1995-2011

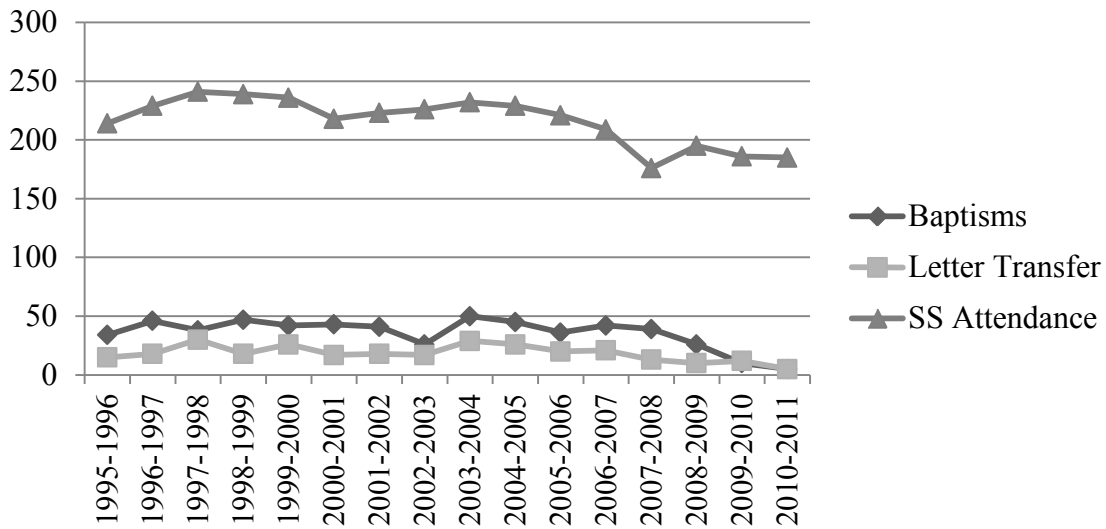


Figure 1. Comparison of the last fifteen years of baptism and letter transfers with Sunday school attendance

Figure 1 displays the membership growth of Vann Avenue for 1995 to 2011. The chart conveys that VABC has experienced a fairly consistent number of baptisms per year, with an average of 39.1. Also, the average number of members acquired through transfer growth for the last fifteen years is 20.3. These statistics indicate that VABC has maintained a healthy balance between seeking new converts and adding existing

<sup>2</sup>Percept Group, *Ministry Area Profile 2010:2608 Vann Avenue* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group, 2010), 3. This was provided by Illinois Baptist State Association through the Southwest Indiana Baptist Association. See Appendix 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

converts. Baptisms have significantly outnumbered transfer growth signifying an outward focus on evangelism. From the numbers displayed in figure 1, it is clear that VABC has been faithful in evangelism and outreach. Through both conversion and transfer growth Vann currently has over 1,400 persons on the membership role. Vann's membership is not commensurate with its attendance.

Upon evaluation, a membership of 1,400 and an average Sunday school attendance of 202 leads one to conclude that although VABC has maintained a healthy baptism and transfer growth record, it has failed to assimilate effectively new converts into the life of the church. For multiple years, VABC baptized around 50 people a year; however, the Sunday school attendance never reflected the growth. In reality, during the 2000 to 2001 church year the church added 42 people through baptism and during the same year declined in Sunday school attendance. These statistics are alarming. The purpose of this project was to aid in correcting this problem. Before presenting solutions I painted a fuller picture of the current realities for the church.

### **Groups VABC is Currently Reaching**

According to the Percept Ministry Area Profile, there are 16,092 white-collar workers and 12,653 blue-collar workers within a three-mile radius of the church facilities.<sup>4</sup> Attendance at VABC approximates the occupational demographics of the community surrounding the church.

VABC's membership roster indicates incorrectly that the church is reaching all age groups. Attendance at VABC is largely made up of men and women over the age of fifty. Half of the regular attendees are over fifty, and half of those are over seventy.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

## **Evangelism Plan for VABC**

The evangelism plan at VABC consists of two visitation opportunities, Tuesday night and Saturday morning. As the men arrive, they pair up in teams of two and are given names of individuals who have not attended church in the last month. Once a name has been assigned to a team, the team makes a visit to check if there are any issues that have prevented those absentees from attending and to encourage them to come back to church. In addition to visiting active church members one team also goes out door to door leaving tracts and inviting residents to attend. The former pastor followed up on all of the prospects. Because the former pastor reserved all prospects for himself, he was instrumental in most of the professions of faith.

## **Contextual Factors**

It is important for churches to understand their contextual factors because they are an important component in seeking the best ways to reach the community. In order to reach the community, Vann Avenue needs to understand its community and contextualize its ministries. Failure to tailor local church ministries to meet the existing realities of the community can lead to frustration and failure. For example, several men at VABC make a regular attempt to go door to door inviting people to church and sharing Christ with them; however, there is little to no response. This reality could be attributed to the fact that, according to Percept's Compass Report, the "church methods rated poor" as door to door visitation received a 63.9 percent poor rating. However, in the category "church contact methods rated good, sending information by mail as 53% positive."<sup>5</sup> Another contextual factor related to receptivity of VABC in the surrounding community is ethnicity.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 7.

VABC is predominately an Anglo church. Percept reports that the White (non-Hispanic) population of the community surrounding VABC is projected to decline by 7,000 people in the next 7 years, while the population of minorities like African-American and Hispanic/Latino are projected to increase.<sup>6</sup> Despite the changing demographics of the community, Vann Avenue remains a predominately white congregation. As Vann begins to know and contextualize its ministries to the surrounding community, the demographics inside the church should begin to reflect those outside the brick veneer walls more accurately.

### **VABC's Strengths and Weaknesses**

If the baptismal record were the only gauge by which to determine whether or not a church is healthy, then VABC would appear to be a picture of health. Make no mistake, the baptism record is important; on the other hand, it is not the only gauge by which one can accurately determine the health of a church's ministry. Analyzing the baptismal record could lead one to the conclusion that VABC is doing well at reaching all age groups. However, comparing the baptismal record to the Sunday school attendance record reveals that Sunday school attendance has been declining for the last six years while the membership numbers have continued to climb. VABC is not assimilating new converts into the ministry of the church. Usually, once new converts were baptized they did not become a part of the family at VABC; instead, the new converts either stopped attending or moved to other churches in Evansville. In attempting to follow up on many of the non-active members, I have discovered that most do not give a biblical reason for being baptized and often give no indication of being followers of Christ.

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<sup>6</sup>Percept Group, *Ministry Area Profile 2010*.



## **The Self-Perception of Vann Avenue**

Upon coming to VABC I asked the staff and leaders to identify the weaknesses of the church. Almost everyone identified two weaknesses, and as pastor I agree with their assessment. The first weakness is a lack of discipleship and follow-through on behalf of the church. This weakness is illustrated through the dismal lack of involvement in outreach and discipleship programs in the church, such as Sunday school. Essentially, the church has relied on the former pastor to win and train new believers, creating a gap between membership and discipleship.

The congregation's perception of younger generations is another weakness mentioned by the existing church leadership. This is a weakness because there is a significant cultural gap between younger and older generations. If the church fails to reach the younger generation, then there is a bleak future awaiting the church. One small example of how the older members fail to connect with the next generation is in their resistance for modernization. For instance, many of the older members of the congregation do not see a need for greater security and safety surrounding children's ministries. These older members are not aware of the quality of childcare that is offered today. Today's parents, unlike the previous generations, have become accustomed to a heightened sense of security because schools, daycares, and even churches develop floor plans, policies, and procedures that are focused on protecting children from harm, exploitation, and abduction. The older generation grew up in a time when people left their doors unlocked at night and any vacant lot would work for activities. Modern parents, on the other hand, tend to expect excellent facilities, trained workers, and cutting-edge safety parameters. These basic requirements are essential to ensuring the confidence of potential families. Excellence in childcare is definitely an area of weakness that needs to be addressed if Vann Avenue wants to continue to reach families with children; however,

despite the weaknesses in the area of discipleship and childcare, Vann Avenue does have some strengths from which they can build.

Some of the strengths of Vann Avenue are: a well organized prayer ministry, a commitment to the Bible as the Word of God, a strong deacon body, and a willingness to be involved in church planting. A large part of the active VABC membership is involved in the prayer ministry. The prayer ministry is a well-organized relay system that uses e-mail and phone calls to inform the members of prayer requests. The church receives weekly requests regarding urgent matters for prayer. These requests often center on emergency health issues. Even many of the member's co-workers have learned about the church's prayer ministry. Members of Vann often receive requests from these co-workers for prayer because Vann is known as a church that prays. Once the requests are placed on the list they rapidly move along the chain. This is an important ministry of the church that builds fellowship among the members and brings glory to God. It encourages a deeper awareness of God's power among those who see their prayers answered. One of the reasons for the success of Vann Avenue's prayer ministry is their firm reliance upon the Bible as the Word of God. VABC prides itself on its commitment to the Bible as its sole authority. "What does the Bible say?" is a question often expressed at VABC. Only God knows the way this commitment to the authority of God's Word has strengthened and protected the ministry of this church. In addition to the strengths of prayer and a firm reliance on the Word of God, Vann Avenue has also been blessed with a strong deacon body. Even though in the first two years I served as pastor six deacons resigned and left the church, the deacons have continued to be one of the greatest strengths of VABC. The four men who remain are determined to be faithful men of God. They serve the church by squelching division and encouraging obedience to God. These faithful men also exude a contagious excitement for the things of God. These men have strengthened my ministry

at the church by sharing the load of hospital visitation and handling the benevolent requests received by the church. Their service in these day to day tasks has enabled me to spend more time with God and sufficient time in sermon preparation. Further, God has recently blessed the church with three additional men. To my knowledge, all of Vann's deacons agree with the new direction of the deacon body, leaving VABC with a total of seven unified deacons, with plans to add more next year.

With strengths in prayer, reliance on the Word of God, and faithful men in the deaconate, God has allowed Vann to be involved in her most significant and potentially long-lasting strength—multiplication through church planting. In the past two years, VABC has sent members to help serve and lead two church plants, one in the Evansville area and the other in the Indianapolis area.<sup>7</sup>

It is encouraging to see the way the Lord is working through the prayer ministry, ministry of the Word, deacon ministry, and church planting at Vann Avenue. There is a faithful remnant of God's people in the church who desire to see the church experience health and growth; however, the community surrounding Vann has changed at a much faster pace than the church and if the church fails to grasp the opportunity the Lord has placed before it, there may be no one in which to pass the ministry after the passing of the remaining saints. All those who see a need for improvement and want to start moving in a better direction are not sure which way to go or how to get started.

### **Rationale**

The book of Nehemiah provides great insight as to why a new vision is

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<sup>7</sup>VABC committed to be the sponsoring church for The Bridge Church plant in Evansville, IN. To help start this plant, seven members committed to sacrificially go and serve. The former Family Life Pastor was encouraged to follow the Lord and move to Carmel, Indiana, to plant. We are still in the early stages of this plant; however, it looks like we will also commit monies and people to assist in Carmel.

presently needed at VABC. Nehemiah heard the bad news about Jerusalem: “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire” (Neh 1:3).<sup>8</sup> Verse 4 goes on to explain that the news was difficult for Nehemiah to hear: “As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” After much prayer in verses 5-11, God gave Nehemiah the eyes to see the reality of the state of Jerusalem. The city was not what it once was, but God provided Nehemiah with a vision to rebuild the walls; God gave Nehemiah a vision of what Jerusalem could become. By God’s help, Nehemiah was able to fulfill the vision God gave him. In addition, the people knew what they were working towards, and through trial and tribulation God gave them the victory of completed walls, which led ultimately to a New Jerusalem.

Recently, VABC has discovered a heart-breaking truth similar to the one given to Nehemiah. VABC is not what it once was, and unless we do something now VABC will cease to exist. VABC has been a strong, trend-setting church in the Evansville area for many years; however, over the last ten years the church has failed to see it is slowly eroding and dying. When I first began my position as Senior Pastor, the church still thought it was doing a great job at reaching the lost, even though the attendance rolls were slowly falling. After the former pastor retired following a tenure of forty-nine years, the baptisms began to decrease, and the congregation immediately assumed it was the result of the new pastor holding the church back from what it once was.

A short time into my tenure the key leaders realized that the former pastor was

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<sup>8</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from Holman Christian Standard Bible.

the one who did all of the work, and they had never been involved in the ministry. The deacons discovered the same thing when they were asked to begin making hospital visits. Their response was, “We have never been involved in making hospital visits; the former pastor always made all the visits.” The church had always been known for the former pastor, and the church found identity and comfort in his ability. Vann Avenue must mature beyond their current understanding of ministry. They cannot be left with the infantile thinking of expecting the pastor to do the entire ministry. It is the responsibility of the pastor to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). The congregation found their identity in the former pastor and now they no longer know who they are. VABC needs new identity and purpose. The congregation needs to have a vision of what VABC can look like if every one of the members becomes a minister. The church needs to understand the relevance of the two-thousand-year-old Great Commission for twenty-first century Vann Avenue.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The purpose of this project was to develop and cast a Great Commission vision that involves the active members of VABC in ministry. Aubrey Malphurs defines vision as “a clear, challenging picture of the future of the ministry, as you believe that it can and must be.”<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of this project, active members consisted of members who attend at least one service weekly.

The limitations of this project were as follows. The length of this project was fifteen weeks. The first five weeks were a preparation time. Preparation for the visioning process will be largely achieved through prayer. Prayer is vital to the success of this

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<sup>9</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 151.

project. Other preparation was achieved through research to determine the current attitudes towards ministry along with the active member's understanding as to how to minister. Additionally, a survey of the community was conducted to determine felt needs. The next five weeks were used to present an exegetical sermon series to communicate the dream of what VABC can accomplish by obedience to the Great Commission. Then, it took three weeks to gather all the information and have a one day visioning workshop where we developed a Great Commission vision for VABC. The last two weeks of the project were used to cast the vision. The long-term effects and results of developing and casting a Great Commission vision was difficult to measure due to the time-frame in which the project had to be completed and the findings reported.

The delimitation centers on the participants in the project. The number was delimited to sixteen. To be involved in the visioning team, participants must have completed the Leadership Greatness seminar. Part of completing the Leadership Greatness training seminar is taking the "Leadership 3in1 Profile" to determine gifts, personality, and passions.<sup>10</sup> The vision process was built on the gifts previously highlighted through the "Leadership 3in1 Profile." Most of the time was focused on understanding biblical ministry and how the needs of the community relate to individual gifts.

### **Research Methodology**

The first goal of this project was to determine the core values of VABC by leading the vision team in a core values discovery seminar. In the seminar I defined core values, and explained their importance to the ministry of VABC. The vision team was

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<sup>10</sup>Mels Carbonell, *Leadership 3-In-1 Profile: Discovering How God Has Uniquely Crafted You* (Alpharetta, GA: NAMB Next Level Leadership Network, 2003).

asked to compile a list of core values representative of VABC.

The second goal was to identify the purpose for which VABC exists. At the beginning of the project, the vision team completed a survey to measure their understanding of the purpose for VABC. After the project the same survey was given and the two sets of results were compared. The comparison of the two surveys displayed a measurable increase in the team's understanding as to the purpose in which VABC exists.

The third goal was to strengthen community outreach by connecting the felt needs of southeast Evansville to the gifts of VABC. Strengthening community outreach was realized in two parts. First, the participants surveyed local schools, city servants, and businesses asking questions that revealed community needs. A list was then compiled from the results of the surveys. Second, community outreach was realized by connecting the gifts of the individual members of the vision team with the needs of the community. This goal was realized through the visioning workshop where we studied illustrations of how others have incorporated their unique gifts in ministry to meet a community need. All of the community needs gathered through the surveys were listed beside the gifts of all the individual members of the team. We then brainstormed as to how to connect the gifts of the body to the needs of the community.

The fourth goal is a personal and involved improvement in my leadership abilities by learning how to develop and cast a Great Commission vision in an established church. A focus group consisting of three vision team members were gathered at the beginning of the project. I then asked them to evaluate my effectiveness in leading through the visioning process.<sup>11</sup> The focus group met a total of four times throughout the

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<sup>11</sup>The focus group evaluated my effectiveness in communication. The team was asked to evaluate my communication both in vision team meetings and sermon delivery.

fifteen weeks. The group was then given a list of questions at the first meeting to guide them in the evaluation process. Each focus group member was asked to think through and answer the questions during the three following meetings. As I worked through the fifteen-week project and evaluated with the team where it was effective and where there was room for improvement, I grew in my leadership and vision casting ability.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I explained the four goals accomplished through this project and examined the demographics representing VABC's community. I also explained in detail the outline of the project in this chapter, as well as gave strong support as to why a project developing and casting a Great Commission vision is needed. Without the new vision providing a new identity, VABC would continue to struggle to be effective at reaching and equipping southeast Evansville.

Not only is there a need for new vision, but that vision must also be firmly grounded in the Word. Every attempt to lead the church outside of the leading of God through His Word will fail to honor and glorify God. In the following chapter I exam the biblical and theological support for developing and casting Great Commission vision.



## CHAPTER 2

### A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR DEVELOPING AND CASTING A GREAT COMMISSION VISION

This chapter focuses on the biblical and theological basis for developing and casting a Great Commission vision. It is not an exhaustive treatise on every text dealing with the subject, but it demonstrates solid scriptural support regarding the importance of allowing God’s Word to be the driving influence for developing a Great Commission vision. Various textual examples from both the Old and New Testaments are examined in order to help illustrate and support the thesis that God’s Word should be the driving force behind vision development.

All things being equal, without a new vision for ministry that leads to a new identity, VABC will by all indications continue to decline and die. Therefore, it was time to ask the question, why does VABC exist? The Great Commission vision provides the reason to continue to keep the doors open Sunday after Sunday. We now have a clear goal at which we are aiming and can continue to grow in an outward focus on the community.

Lyle Schaller describes churches like VABC as low commitment churches: “In today’s world, the most common difference between numerically growing congregations and those on a plateau in size or declining in numbers is commitment.”<sup>1</sup> Developing and casting vision helped to increase commitment among the members of VABC. This vision

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<sup>1</sup>Lyle Schaller, *44 Steps Up Off the Plateau* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 75.

refocused the church in regards to evangelism, and helped them to aim at fulfilling the Great Commission by providing specific ministries to our community. Schaller continues,

The congregation that wishes to move up off a plateau in size probably will have to replace the means-to-an-end issues that now dominate the agenda with a stronger focus on role, direction, ministry, outreach, goals, and the priorities that will direct the allocation of scarce resources.<sup>2</sup>

It is my hope that the revelatory vision of who VABC is in Christ, and obedience to what the Lord has called the church to do, will continue to generate growth and excitement.

### **Vision Is Revealed in God's Word**

Vision must come from God and be rooted in the Word to be a Great Commission vision. Businesses need to develop and effectively relay their vision in order to remain competitive in today's economy. The church, however, is much different than any local or national business. The church operates under God's economy and for the church that means it must first understand the rules and definition of success according to God's economy. The title of this project limited the vision to being a "Great Commission" vision distinguishing the church from business models operating outside the biblical framework. George Barna says, "That's what His vision is about: maximizing your God-given potential to bless God and others through your commitment to doing His work, His way. We all need His vision."<sup>3</sup>

The vision for the church is unique because it must first be grounded in the Word of God. Barna assumes that when churches receive their vision from the Bible they

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>George Barna, *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Vision for Your Life and Ministry* (Ventura, CA: Regal from Gospel Light, 2009), 14.

are receiving direction from God: “Imagine what the world and the Church would be like if we all took our direction from Him for the sole purpose of serving Him! What a different—and wonderful—world it would be.”<sup>4</sup> Since God is the author of vision, and since He has spoken plainly in His Word, the following sections examine select passages from both the Old and New Testaments. These texts provide a firm foundation for understanding God’s economy; further, they supply the biblical framework for a Great Commission vision.

**The Lord’s Plans Will Not Fail:  
Psalm 33:10-11**

Psalm 33 calls on the Lord’s people to praise God for His sovereign rule and creative power. According to the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Psalm 33 calls for praise because “those who trust in Him are assured that He will fulfill His promises to them and consummate His work of salvation.”<sup>5</sup> The psalmist exhorts God’s people by reminding them of the dependability of the Lord’s Word in verse 4, the power of His Word in verse 6, and then the power of His Word in history in verses 10-11. Psalm 33:11 teaches the reality that God’s plans will be established no matter who stands against them. D. A. Carson writes, “Because God spoke, creation came into existence. What God decrees, happens. Therefore all peoples of the world should worship Him.”<sup>6</sup> This Lord, Who decrees, and is worthy of worship, is the source of a GCV.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 818.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>I use GCV and Great Commission vision interchangeably referring to the divine revelation as defined by Prov 29:18.

In addition to its source, the foundation of developing a vision must also begin with the Lord; He is the key to establishing long-term gospel change. VABC can make a strong effort to plan for future ministry but if our plans are not the Lord's then they will not succeed. Psalm 33:11 is an encouragement not only to praise God for His dependability but also to begin all plans in prayer asking the Lord to establish His plan in His church. Developing vision is not for VABC to search out and then tell the Lord what we come up with, but to allow the Lord to establish His vision in us.

**The Importance of Prophetic Instruction:  
Proverbs 29:18**

The book of Proverbs is classified as part of the wisdom literature in the Old Testament. According to the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*,

Wisdom is a capacity of the mind; in the OT it involves both knowledge and the ability to direct the mind toward a full understanding of human life and toward its moral fulfillment. Wisdom is thus a special capacity, necessary for full human living.<sup>8</sup>

The starting point of wisdom must be God—the creator and sustainer of all that exists. Thus, the book of Proverbs begins with instruction (1:7) to reverence God and recognize Him as the source of all wisdom: “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” The wisdom of God revealed in the Word of God not only supplies a clear way to eternal life but also supplies clear direction as to how to live according to God's wisdom in this life. Duane Garrett explains, “The function of the Scriptures is not only to lead unbelievers to repentance and faith in Christ but also to instruct and nurture believers with truth that transforms our understanding and our lives.”<sup>9</sup> In reference to the book of

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<sup>8</sup>Walter A Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), s.v. “wisdom.”

<sup>9</sup>Duane A Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 20.

Proverbs, Daniel Estes adds,

The book of Proverbs contains instructions in wisdom for life. Starting from a profound reverence for Yahweh, the wise teachers of ancient Israel reflected on what they observed in various areas of life. As they reflected on what they saw, they discovered patterns of acts and consequences that could serve either as wise examples to follow or foolish errors to avoid. . . . Because they are presented as universal maxims, the timeless truths of these proverbs speak with powerful relevance to life today.<sup>10</sup>

Proverbs 29:18 is part of the greater couplet found in verses 15-18, which employs parallelism to provide admonition for both parents and society.<sup>11</sup> The warning for parents in the home is to discipline their children (15, 17) and the warning for society is to maintain focus on prophetic instruction (16, 18). The results of no discipline in the home and a society that has lost its focus on prophetic instruction are the same, sinful behavior in disregard to God's law. Verse 17 establishes the need for children to submit to their parents and verse 18 establishes the need for people to submit to the Word of God.<sup>12</sup>

In order to dig deeper into verse 18 it is important to understand vision in the original language, distinguishing vision in Proverbs 29:18 from just an ordinary goal or dream of what ministry could look like. The Hebrew word for vision is *חִזְיוֹן*, meaning a divine revelation.<sup>13</sup> Divine revelation clearly signifies something greater than a dream of “what things could be” in ministry. H. A. Ironside defines vision as “insight into divine

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<sup>10</sup>Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 213.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>W. Gesenius and S. P. Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 269. In Logos Research Systems (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2003).

things.”<sup>14</sup> VABC must form a vision that is first informed from divine revelation. what Ironside continues,

Where the Word of God controls there will be blessing. He who keeps it will be happy amidst the existing confusion. . . . When leaving the Ephesian elders at Miletus, it was not to gifted ministers that Paul commanded them, in view of evil teachers soon to arise, but to God and the word of His grace, which was able to build them up.<sup>15</sup>

A GCV is first based on the Word of God. Proverbs 29:18 warns God’s people that the consequence of disregarding His law leads to society becoming deprived of moral restraints.<sup>16</sup> The goal for VABC is to have a vision that is formed from the Word of God and seeks to glorify God by seeking to be a catalyst for change by proclaiming the gospel. The end result will be a society that, instead of casting off moral restraint, takes pleasure in obeying the law.

### **Examples of Vision in the Old Testament**

It is often a temptation to jump ahead of the Old Testament in order to gain a perspective of vision for the church as laid out in the New Testament. However, the context of the New Testament passages must be developed from their Old Testaments counterparts. The Old Testament contains valuable examples of vision, which are critical to understanding examples of New Testament vision.

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<sup>14</sup>H. A. Ironside, *Proverbs and Song of Solomon: An Ironside Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 259.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>R. Jamieson et al., *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), 401, in Logos Research Systems (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

## Genesis 12:1-2

Genesis 12:1-2 serves as a prime example of Old Testament GCV. Brokenness and despair have been some of the themes of Genesis 3 to 11. The perfect world created by God was now broken and needed rescuing. Chapter 12 is significant because as James McKeown writes, “Creation had come into being through divine speech, and now at this strategic turning point in the history of the created order God speaks again.”<sup>17</sup> The divine turning point is God’s call to Abram. His call (often referred to as the Abrahamic Covenant) was the beginning of the divine rescue that would lead to the ultimate rescue in the New Covenant blood of calvary. McKeown goes on to write, “This is God’s agenda for reclaiming the initiative and stopping the destructive cycle of rebellion and cursing followed by further rebellion and consequential punishment.”<sup>18</sup> God triumphantly leads His people from death to life as they follow His call.

God gives a command in verse 1 to go and then proceeds by providing a sevenfold promise.<sup>19</sup> The sevenfold promise consequently provides vision for Abram. The vision made clear what God was going to do through Abram if he continued in obedience. Abram was to leave behind everything familiar to him resulting in him becoming a nomad in a strange land. Why would Abram do such a crazy thing? Abram obeys God because God was going to bless all the families of the Earth through his act of obedience.

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<sup>17</sup>James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 73-74.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>God’s call is accompanied by a comprehensive set of promises that contain seven elements: (1) “I will make of you a great nation,” (2) “I will bless you,” (3) “I will make your name great,” (4) “you shall be a blessing,” (5) “I will bless those who bless you,” (6) “curse him that curses you,” and (7) “all the families of the earth/ shall bless themselves by you.” Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 88-89.

What ultimately was taking place in Genesis 12:1-2 was much bigger than Abram, his family, or a nation. John H. Walton explains, “When Abraham responds to the covenant offer, he leaves a life behind as he embraces the promises of God. In doing so, he steps into a role as a dispenser of grace, specifically, but not limited to the grace of God through his revelation.”<sup>20</sup> Through the spoken word, God set in motion the plan to reverse the brokenness brought on by Adam. The promise of God becomes the vision of what God was going to accomplish through Abram’s obedience. This revelatory vision stretches from Abraham to Christ. Walton continues, “God is determined to reveal himself through the covenant and through Israel regardless of whether that [sic] there are two sides of the covenant. Abram’s family has something to gain by being cooperative, thus the promises of land and family.”<sup>21</sup> When life became difficult for Abram, he was able to remain focused on the big picture God had set before him. The divine vision gave Abram, and ultimately Israel, a sense of divine calling and mission. Henry Morris adds, “God had long ago made it clear that the Savior would be born into the human family (“seed of the woman,” as promised in Gen. 3:15), and now it becomes clear to Abram that it would be accomplished through his own family.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Nehemiah 1-2:10**

Abraham is not the only man who received a vision from God under the Old Covenant. The book of Nehemiah also provides a great example of Great Commission vision as well as the process involved in developing Great Commission vision. God uses

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<sup>20</sup>John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 339.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 295.



his servant leader Nehemiah to continue in carrying out the promise to Abraham.<sup>23</sup> In the vision to Abram in Genesis 12:2-3 God promised to make Israel a great nation and “to curse those who treat you with contempt.” The authors of the *ESV Study Bible* explain,

God is renewing his people in the land, in order to carry out what he promised to Abraham. God’s people must renew their commitment to covenant faithfulness, laying hold of God’s forgiveness and seeking to practice purity in their corporate and private lives.<sup>24</sup>

Nehemiah will lead the charge in this endeavor.

In 586 BC, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians when Nebuchadnezzar led an invasion.<sup>25</sup> One Hundred and forty years later, even though the temple was rebuilt, Jerusalem was still in a state of ruin. According to the *ESV Study Bible*, “The Jewish community was struggling to maintain its identity as the people of the Lord, as it faced internal and external pressures.”<sup>26</sup> The temple itself took fifteen years to rebuild because of the opposition of the Samaritans, and the city wall was never fully reconstructed.<sup>27</sup> Jerusalem’s wall was a strategic part of the city’s defense from would be attackers. Nehemiah begins with bad news about Jerusalem in Nehemiah 1:3: “They said to me, ‘the survivors in the province, who returned from the exile, are in great trouble and

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<sup>23</sup>Mervin Breneman writes, “Nehemiah was a genuine leader, an excellent administrator, and a man of prayer. He exhibited many principles of sound administrative practice. Nehemiah’s single mindedness of purpose, attention to detail, willingness to delegate authority, dedication to service, and dependence on God were combined in a man who can simply be labeled as a servant of God.” Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, The New American Commentary, vol. 10 (Nashville: Broadman &Holman, 1993), 54.

<sup>24</sup>*ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 822.

<sup>25</sup>James Montgomery Boice, *Nehemiah: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 16-17.

<sup>26</sup>*ESV Study Bible*, 800.

<sup>27</sup>Boice, *Nehemiah*, 16-17.

disgrace. Jerusalem's wall has been broken down, and its gates have been burned down.” Verse 4 goes on to explain that the news was difficult for Nehemiah to hear, because all of the progress that had been made on the wall was lost.<sup>28</sup> The inhabitants of Jerusalem would have to start from the very beginning again to rebuild the walls, which had been an impossible task until Nehemiah's arrival in 445 BC.<sup>29</sup> The following paragraphs outline the steps that Nehemiah took in order to lead God's people to fulfill His vision.

For Nehemiah, the first step in developing a Great Commission vision was prayer. In verse 4, Nehemiah sets the example for believers who seek to develop a Great Commission vision by fasting and praying “for some days.” James Boice, in his exposition of Nehemiah, reminds the reader that it is easy to get priorities mixed up. Some place priority on relationships with people and still others place priority on organizing and planning.<sup>30</sup> Nehemiah's first priority was neither people nor planning, but prayer. Boice explains, “When the problem of the broken walls of Jerusalem was presented to Nehemiah the first priority of this great and (later) very successful leader was prayer.”<sup>31</sup> Nehemiah had great concern for the people of God and he was able to humble himself before God. Nehemiah recognized that if the wall around Jerusalem was going to be rebuilt it was only going to be accomplished by the hand of God. Boice goes on to write, “Nehemiah prayed for the simple reason that no one but God could accomplish

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<sup>28</sup>Breneman writes, “Nehemiah seems to have been surprised and appalled; therefore it is reasonable to suppose that Ezra 4:12 refers to a partial building of walls at some time after the first return in 538 that had been destroyed, perhaps by Rehum and Shimshai when they interceded according to Ezra 4:23.” Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 170.

<sup>29</sup>Boice, *Nehemiah*, 17.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

what needed to be accomplished if the walls of the city were to rise again.”<sup>32</sup>

The fact that Nehemiah prayed is not the only significant lesson about his vision development; what he prayed is also integral. What Nehemiah prayed reveals valuable information on how to develop a Great Commission vision. Nehemiah displays a profound understanding of his own limitations and the infinite ability of God to act. According to Brenemen, what Nehemiah prayed was important for two reasons: “The first is at the beginning of his prayer—his deep understanding of who God is. The second is seen throughout the prayer—his thorough knowledge of God’s word.”<sup>33</sup>

In verse 5, Nehemiah exalted God by praising him for glorious attributes: “The great awe-inspiring God.”<sup>34</sup> Brenemen writes that verse 5 “indicates Nehemiah’s appreciation of who God is: the one whom Nehemiah feared and the source and object of his deep faith. . . . Those who know and trust God are those who fear him.”<sup>35</sup> Nehemiah knew that if anything was going to be accomplished in the way of rebuilding, it would have to be the work of God. The same holds true today, if the church is to be effective at penetrating lostness it must be the work of God.

The second lesson concerning Nehemiah’s prayer is his deep understanding of God’s word. Throughout, Nehemiah bases his prayer on God’s word. Nehemiah was able to understand God’s big picture because he understood it in the context of God’s revealed Word. Brenemen explains,

Nehemiah’s prayer shows a profound understanding and faith in what God had promised in his Word. Nehemiah challenges us to prayer based on an understanding

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 170.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 171.

of God's purpose and will as found in his Word. He also reminds us that we can always begin again in our relationship with God if we return to him in humility.<sup>36</sup>

After much prayer in verses 5-11, God gave Nehemiah a vision to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Verse 11 says that Nehemiah does not tell anyone what God had laid on his heart to do for Jerusalem. God gave Nehemiah eyes to see the reality of the state of Jerusalem and a vision to see what Jerusalem would become when the wall was rebuilt. By God's strength, Nehemiah was able to fulfill the vision. Nehemiah knew what he was working towards, and through trial and tribulation God gave him the victory of completed walls, which led ultimately to a New Jerusalem. Breneman sums this idea up well: "The most important thing about Nehemiah is that he was a man of God, and because he was close to God in prayer and personal piety, he was able to draw from God the wisdom, patience, skill, and perseverance he needed to complete his great task."<sup>37</sup>

There are certainly other examples of vision given in the Old Testament. Hebrews 11 presents a "who's who" of visionaries who received a revelation from God and obeyed. However, since the focus of this paper is on a Great Commission vision, it is appropriate to move on to New Covenant expressions of vision.

### **Examples of Vision in the New Testament**

Vision in the New Testament is a continuation of vision from the Old Testament; however, there is a greater emphasis on πάντα τα ἔθνη ("all nations," Matt 28:19). What God began in Genesis 3 he carries out in Matthew with the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Walter Kaiser writes,

The nations were to be blessed in this man's "seed." Accordingly, the "seed" of the woman (Gen. 3:15, the "seed" of Shem in whose tents God would 'dwell' (Gen.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 9.

9:27), and the “seed” of Abraham formed one collective whole. That one “seed” was epitomized through its succession of representatives who acted as earnest or down payments until Christ himself should come in that same line of representatives as both part of that succession and as the final consummation of that to which it pointed.<sup>38</sup>

The New Testament provides understanding of how the church is to continue the vision established by God for Abraham in Genesis 12, to be a blessing to all people. Jesus, God the Son incarnate, came to dwell on earth to crush the head of Satan by making atonement for sin. Jesus, the sinless son of God, suffered under the wrath of God and the penalty of the law on behalf of those who repent of their sins and place their faith in Him. Before ascending back to the father, Jesus commands the church to be a blessing to the nations by making disciples. God sends His Spirit at Pentecost to empower the disciples to preach the Word of God with boldness and to open the eyes of the spiritually blind. The next step is to examine the Great Commission vision given by Jesus and how it is to be carried out by the body of Christ, the church.

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

The gospel of Matthew rightly comes first in the New Testament because of the way the book presents the clear connection between Jesus ministry and the Old Testament. Wenham and Walton write, “Matthew’s Gospel comes first in our NT, and there is an appropriateness in that, since Matthew so explicitly connects the story of Jesus to the OT.”<sup>39</sup> They go on to explain that Matthew is “a highly Jewish document,” using Jewish terminology and interpreting Jesus through Jewish categories.<sup>40</sup> Matthew traces

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<sup>38</sup>Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 20.

<sup>39</sup>David Wenham and Steve Walton, *Exploring the New Testament*, vol. 1, *A Guide to the Gospels & Acts*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 209.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 209, 217.

Jesus' ministry first to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5), and then, as Jesus broadens his target audience, to the Gentiles. Jesus culminates His earthly ministry with a Great Commission given that will include all the "nations" (28:19).<sup>41</sup> According to Carson, Moo, and Morris, contained within Matthew's purpose is the goal to present Jesus as the promised Messiah in fulfillment to Old Testament prophecy and that the "promised eschatological kingdom has already dawned, inaugurated by the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus."<sup>42</sup> Wenham and Walton add, "If we had to isolate one overarching theme for Matthew, 'fulfillment,' kingdom and Christology would be all strong contenders."<sup>43</sup>

The themes of fulfillment and Christology appear as early in Matthew as the genealogy of Jesus. Blomberg writes about 1:1: "the Son of Abraham" traces Jesus' lineage back to the founding father of the nation of Israel, thus ensuring . . . God's promises to Abraham that his offspring would bless all the peoples of the earth (Gen 12:1-3).<sup>44</sup> God was fulfilling his promise to Abraham; through his seed all the nations

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 218.

<sup>42</sup>D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 81. "There are five themes listed for the purpose of Matthew: 1. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Son of Man, Immanuel, the one to whom the Old Testament points; 2. Many Jews, especially Jewish leaders, sinfully failed to recognize Jesus during his ministry (and, by implication, are in great danger if they continue in that stance after the resurrection); 3. The promised eschatological kingdom has already dawned, inaugurated by the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus; 4. This messianic reign is continuing in the world, as believers, both Jews and Gentiles, submit to Jesus' teaching, and thus demonstrate that they constitute the true locus of the people of God and the true witness to the world of the 'gospel of the kingdom'; and 5. This messianic reign is not only the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes but the foretaste of the consummated kingdom that will dawn when Jesus the Messiah personally returns." Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Wenham and Walton, *Exploring the New Testament*, 1: 219.

<sup>44</sup>Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 52-53.

would be blessed. D. A. Carson explains,

Gen. 22:18 had promised that through Abraham's offspring "all nations" would be blessed; so with this allusion to Abraham, Matthew is preparing his readers for the final words of this offspring from Abraham—the commission to make disciples of "all nations" (28:19).<sup>45</sup>

Matthew begins by pronouncing Jesus as the fulfillment of Genesis 12:2-3 in Matthew 1:1. He then builds to a climax ending with the Great Commission in 28:16-20. Carson continues,

It has long been recognized that the closing periscope (28:16-20) is fully intended to be the climax toward which the entire gospel moves. By tying together some of Matthew's most dominant themes, these verses give them a new depth that reaches back and sheds light on the entire gospel. For instance, the Great Commission is perceived to be the result of God's providential ordering of history (1:1-7) to bring to a fallen world a Messiah who would save his people from their sins (1:21).<sup>46</sup>

The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:16-20 provides the vision of God's plan to redeem fallen man. Carson, Moo and Morris explain,

The resurrection narratives (28:1-17) climax in the great commission, placing the job of spreading the gospel and the content of Jesus' teaching squarely on the shoulders of the small enclave of witnesses, who are assured of Jesus' presence with them to the end of the age (28:18-20).<sup>47</sup>

The gospel spreads and God builds His church. Ultimately, what began as a vision to the eleven continues as a vision for the entire New Testament church. Lawrence adds,

The Church, like Israel, is given a corporate, even federal, identity. Israel is called God's son, and we are called Christ's body. But once again, that's not the whole story. The church is also given a specific mission by Christ its Head. It is to make disciples, it is to preach the gospel, and it is to teach disciples to obey everything Jesus has commanded us (Matt. 28:18-20).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 2 of *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary*, ed. Kenneth L Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 7.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>47</sup>Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 65.

<sup>48</sup>Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 206-07.

The Great Commission vision found in Matthew 28:19 is a continuation of Genesis 3:15 and 12:2-3 emphasizing again the words “all nations.” God’s vision is to include all the people of the world in His plan of redemption. Verse 19 does not turn from the Jews to the Gentiles, but instead Matthew widens the scope from that of 10:5: “Jesus sent out these 12 after giving them instructions.” Nolland explains, “Matthew uses ἔθνη *alone* when referring to the Gentiles, but when he speaks of ‘all the ἔθνη,’ he no longer uses ἔθνη to distinguish Gentiles from Jews but rather refers to the whole of humanity.”<sup>49</sup>

Matthew 28:16-20 forms the basis for the Great Commission vision.<sup>50</sup> Matthew challenges the church to see Jesus in the context of God’s purpose for the people of Israel and for the world. Matthew also encourages believers to have a high view of the church as the community founded by Jesus to fulfill God’s purpose.<sup>51</sup> It is easy for the church to lose sight of this vision and allow its members to become consumers instead of servants. In order to become focused on the community, the church must keep focused on the vision given in Matthew 28, and the Giver of the vision, the Lord Jesus Christ. This focus could result in fulfillment of the vision of the nation’s knowing and obeying Christ. However, one cannot forget that we have a helper for that focus, the Holy Spirit.

### **Acts 1:8**

The book of Acts is the second volume written by Luke, Paul’s beloved companion. In Luke’s first volume (the Gospel of Luke) he concludes with Jesus’

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<sup>49</sup>John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1265-66. Emphasis original.

<sup>50</sup>Matt 28:16-20 is not the only text for the basis of the Great Commission. Others include Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:44-48, John 20:21-23, and Acts 1:8.

<sup>51</sup>Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 224-25.



completed earthly ministry. In the second volume (the book of Acts), Luke opens with Jesus preparing the disciples for their ministry.<sup>52</sup> The book of Acts traces the work of the Holy Spirit in growing the church from the disciples to the nations. Wenham and Walton write, “Acts is a challenging and wide-ranging book, telling the story of the growth and development of the church, as it expands geographically (from Jerusalem to Rome) and ethnically (beginning with Jewish people) and gradually including Gentiles.”<sup>53</sup>

The promise given in Acts 1:8 serves as the vision for the early church throughout the book. Line by line Luke details how the Holy Spirit accomplishes the task of getting the gospel to the nations. Kent Hughes explains, “Verse 8 is the key verse of the entire book of Acts. Chapters 1–7 tell of the witness ‘in Jerusalem,’ chapters 8–11 the witness ‘in all Judea and Samaria,’ and chapters 12–28 the witness ‘to the ends of the earth.’”<sup>54</sup> What was promised in 1:8 is slowly fulfilled through the obedient disciples.

In 1:7, the disciples ask Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. They are still unclear just how Jesus is planning to bring about His kingdom. In Jesus’ last earthly words to His disciples he does not give exact details about the final consummation of his kingdom. However, He does explain in clear terms the task for those who are to follow him. The “restoration of the kingdom” involves, according to John Polhill, a “worldwide mission.” This would be a mission in accordance with the plan of the Father, the vision revealed by the Son, and the power provided by the Spirit. Jesus had already reminded His disciples that “apart from me you can do nothing” (John

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<sup>52</sup>John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 80.

<sup>53</sup>Wenham and Walton, *Exploring the New Testament*, 1: 267.

<sup>54</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 15.

15:5), and he would soon send the power for abiding in Christ in the person of the Spirit.

Jesus set in motion his plan to redeem the nations when he commissioned the church to be his witnesses in Acts 1:8 and empowered them in Acts 2. Polhill explains,

Jesus promised the disciples two things: power and witness. The future tense here has an imperatival sense: “you *will* [must] receive power”; “you *will* be my witnesses.” . . . The power they were to receive was divine power; the word is *dynamis*, the same word used of Jesus’ miracles in the Gospels. It is the *Spirit’s* power (2:1-21). The endowment with the Spirit is the prelude to, the equipping for, mission.<sup>55</sup>

Because of Jesus clear inclusion of “the nations” in the second half of verse 8, the plan God spoke of in Genesis 12 begin to come to fruition. Acts 1:8 calls on the church to embrace Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the ends of world. As a result of the Acts 1:8 vision the Gentiles are inclusion.<sup>56</sup> Although it was a challenge for the early church to embrace the gentiles, the Spirit led through the apostle Paul, and, with much hesitation, the apostle Peter. Wenham and Walton explain, “It is consistently God who pushes out the boundaries of the community of believers, to the Ethiopian eunuch, to Samaritans, to a god-fearing centurion, and to outright Gentiles—often against the church’s initial resistance.”<sup>57</sup>

Throughout the book of Acts the early church is challenged to maintain the GCV as the central focus. The early church had to cut out everything that prohibited it from looking beyond the congregation to the community around. Acts 10 is a great example of God moving the church to see others who were in great need of salvation. God spoke to Peter in a dream moving him beyond his normal focus for ministry, the

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<sup>55</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

<sup>56</sup>Wenham and Walton, *Exploring the New Testament*, 1: 293.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

Jewish people, to a people he formally deemed unclean, the gentiles. The church today must heed the warning against being inwardly focused and hanging on to one particular way of doing ministry and miss what God may be doing in their community.<sup>58</sup>

Jesus last words teaches Christians to long for the gospel to go to the ends of the earth. The phrase ‘the end of the Earth,’ according to Wenham and Walton, “is drawn from Isaiah 49:6, and suggests that the phrase simply means ‘the whole world’, without having a particular place in mind ‘the end of the earth.’”<sup>59</sup> Followers of Christ are to yearn for the gospel to go to the ends of the earth beginning first in their own community. Max Anders and Kenneth Gangel write, “Every believer should be a ‘world Christian,’ able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.”<sup>60</sup> A burden for unreached people groups first begins as a burden for unreached neighbors. Jesus’ final words to his church demand the gospel to be taken seriously. Hughes writes, “The command to be Christ’s witnesses is for all true believers in Him. There are no loopholes. No one can say, ‘This does not apply to me’”<sup>61</sup>

### **Ephesians 4:1-16**

Paul first laid the foundation for the church at Ephesus on his second missionary journey. Later, on his third journey, Paul places Ephesus on his itinerary and

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<sup>58</sup>“The frequency with which God does something new and the church has then to catch up—notable with the expansion of the church into Gentile territories and peoples—is a sobering warning against being so locked into our particular way of doing things that we miss something fresh which God is doing.” Ibid., 298.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 271.

<sup>60</sup>Max Anders and Kenneth Gangel, *Acts*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 11.

<sup>61</sup>Hughes, *Acts*, 17.

spends almost three years teaching and building up the body for the work of ministry.<sup>62</sup>

Ephesus proved to be a strategic city for the spread of the gospel in Asia. According to A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesus was surrounded by 230 independent communities within the Roman province of Asia. If the Christian faith were firmly established in the capital city, it would be spread from the hub to the rim.”<sup>63</sup>

Paul writes the book of Ephesians to establish right understanding and to inspire right action on behalf of the body.<sup>64</sup> Even though Paul does not write to combat particular issues, he does write to communicate his vision of what the church should be under the headship of Christ. Wood summarizes Paul’s purpose for Ephesians: “He rose above the smoke of battle and captured a vision of God’s sovereign plan that transcends the bitterness of controversy and the necessity for the church militant to fight incessantly for its existence.”<sup>65</sup> Ephesus is a helpful paradigm for a church such as VABC. There is a battle to be fought and souls that could be influenced by the ministry of VABC are in the balance.

In chapter 4 Paul turns from theological concerns discussed in the first three chapters to the practical concerns of living. By using “therefore” at the beginning of the chapter Paul grounds everything he is about to say in his earlier teaching in the book. Hence “therefore” does not just connect the remaining letter to 3:20-21 but the entire first

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<sup>62</sup>A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 2 of *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary*, ed. Kenneth L Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 749.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 751.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

three chapters.<sup>66</sup> Paul summons all believers to “walk worthy of their calling.” Walking worthy has everything to do with how the members of the body relate to each other. The εκκλησία (the called out ones) are to become one body under the headship of Christ (4:15).<sup>67</sup> According to Wood, “The Spirit who has spanned this widest of all gulfs will bring together all other diverse groups within the church.”<sup>68</sup>

Paul communicates in 4:1-5 a vision for the church and in 4:12 he explains how the vision of the “one body” is going to be accomplished. God gifted the leadership “for the training of the saints in the work of ministry.” According to Hughes, verse 12 “is a watershed text for the doctrine of the Church.”<sup>69</sup> The leadership of the church is not to be the only active participating members in the life of the body. Hughes continues concerning verse 12, “It shoots down the model of a “bus, in which the pastor does all the driving while the congregation are the passengers slumbering in peaceful security behind him.”<sup>70</sup>

In 4:15 Paul establishes Christ as the “head” of the body, and verse 16 describes the church serving as the body. Carson writes, “The whole body’s growth

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<sup>66</sup>D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 21st Century ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994), 1236. “Here Paul speaks of our calling as one to live together in a way that embodies the cosmic unity God has inaugurated. This passage thus sets the tone for the remainder of the letter, and provides the link with what has gone before. That link is made not only in the summarizing theme of unity in these verses but specifically in the ‘therefore’ (NIV *then*) of v 1 which (as at Rom. 12:1) grounds the appeal in the earlier teaching.” Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Wood, *Ephesians*, 767.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 134.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid. Emphasis original.

ultimately comes *from* Christ, but the body grows as *each part* does its apportioned building work in love.”<sup>71</sup> Every member of the church makes up a part of the body of Christ and each part of the body has a specific job to do. Hughes explains,

The bottom line for every Christian believer is that each one of us should be involved in some kind of ministry. Praise God—many have created their own areas of service: to refugees, unwed mothers, the homeless, the elderly, the handicapped, the pornography battle, pro-life witness—to name a few. But those who have no place of service are aberrations. Every believer is to minister! We all have a part to play!<sup>72</sup>

Although Christians are to strive to maintain unity, perfect unity will not be accomplished until Christ returns. D. A. Carson reminds the reader that although Christians already participate in the unity of Christ that began at the cross, it will not be fully realized until Christ’s second coming. Carson writes,

By faith, and in our knowledge of the Son, we already participate in this unity, but we yet wait to see it fully realized. At Christ’s coming, and only then, shall we, the universal corporate church, ‘form the Perfect Man’, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.<sup>73</sup>

However, just because total unity will not be realized until the consummation of Christ’s kingdom, Christians should not stop striving for that unity. In verse 16 Christians are commanded to build one another up in love until that day.

Until Christ returns, the church is to operate under the vision laid out in 4:1-16. One of the reasons VABC has struggled in the last few years is because we have no vision to direct ministry. VABC must keep the vision laid out in Ephesians 4 in sight or we will continue in disunity. Chuck Lawless writes,

In many cases, Satan has to do little work to create disunity in a church. The disunity is often already there, particularly when the church has no unifying vision or direction. There is no known great cause driving the church forward, so they

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<sup>71</sup>Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1239.

<sup>72</sup>Hughes, *Ephesians*, 134.

<sup>73</sup>Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1238.

become inwardly focused and susceptible to division.

They have no marching orders, so the best they can do is to react to whatever comes their way. . . On the other hand, the healthy church is united around a vision, prayerfully expecting God to do His work through their church.<sup>74</sup>

### **Conclusion**

There are many examples of vision found in the Bible, some of which have been examined, demonstrating solid Scriptural support for developing a Great Commission vision. From Abraham to Paul, God has been directing His people in establishing His plan to bless the nations through the God Man Jesus Christ. Examining Nehemiah highlights the importance of prayer in the vision discovery process. Ephesians 4:1-16 admonishes the church to be a team working together under the authority of Christ. The goal for VABC should be that every member sees themselves as a minister and every minister is involved in serving. Every member of VABC is important and vital for the task of reaching southeast Evansville with the gospel.

In order for lasting and effective change to take place, VABC must establish vision through prayer and study of the Word of God, relying on God to establish His vision in us. Proverbs 29:18 warns that without prophetic instruction the people will cast off restraint. My goal for VABC is that we would form a vision from the Word of God and seek to glorify God by seeking to be a catalyst for change by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to southeast Evansville. VABC must transition from being inward-focused to pursuing the community and penetrating darkness with the gospel. The vision the Lord establishes will be a Great Commission vision that unites VABC and affects the community with real gospel change.

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<sup>74</sup>Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 175.

CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES IN  
DEVELOPING AND CASTING A GREAT  
COMMISSION VISION

Chapter 2 presented the biblical and theological aspects for vision development and vision casting. The purpose of this present chapter is to examine many of the available resources that delineate vision as essential to institutional advancement. This survey is necessary because it will aid in revealing the relevance and importance of developing vision and effectively casting that vision to the body of Christ known as VABC.

VABC, over time, has become a relatively inward-focused congregation. Much energy is spent trying to maintain current structures and attempting to keep the current membership “happy,” instead of spending time and resources reaching and teaching the surrounding community to follow Jesus as Lord.

As noted by Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless in their book, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*, “It is not the organization and structure per se that is an obstacle to ministry and growth. The problem occurs when the purpose of the structure is no longer relevant.”<sup>1</sup> Rainer and Lawless encourage asking questions that reveal inward focus and institutional stagnation. One such pertinent question for VABC is, does the structures of VABC exist to carry out the current vision

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<sup>1</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Charles E. Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Pinnacle, 2003), 44.



of the church or has the vision and purpose for which the structures were created long been outlived? Is it possible that the organization and structure exists only for reasons of nostalgia and fear of change?<sup>2</sup> When answering “yes” to these questions Rainer and Lawless exhort, “The church must renew its outward focus.”<sup>3</sup> VABC, like most churches with a similar history, finds itself in a comfortable rut without the ability to perceive a clear way out. VABC must refocus outward, or we will continue to move away from relevancy and community impacting ministry. Rainer and Lawless contend, “Clearly the way ‘out of the rut’ is to move from a focus on the organization and structure to an outward focus. The mistake made by many leaders of traditional churches is to attack the organization and structure rather than refocus the church.”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, instead of attacking the sheep, this chapter examines the theoretical and practical issues that lend themselves to faithful shepherding through developing and casting vision. Although the research has unearthed a plethora of resources that speak to developing and casting vision, space permits only drawing from four pertinent sources that speak specifically to VABC’s current state.

### **Grasping Reality**

In order for VABC to embrace a new vision for ministry, the church has to honestly evaluate the reality of the current condition. We have to discover the “brutal facts.” In his book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t*, Jim Collins asks, “Can a good company become a great company and, if so,

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid. I used Rainer and Lawless’ purpose questions but adapted them specifically to VABC.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 62.

how?”<sup>5</sup> Collins and his team answer the question by identifying the companies that made the leap from good to great and sustained those results for a period of at least fifteen years.<sup>6</sup> The results gathered from the research were then (after meeting rigorous standards) formatted into a framework. The framework was divided into three broad stages; disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action.<sup>7</sup> In the second stage Collins begins with the concept of confronting brutal facts, “You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND *at the same time* have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”<sup>8</sup> Every company that made the switch from good to great had to face the facts of why they were not great in order to break through to greatness. VABC can learn from Collins’ research to take a step back and accurately determine the current reality.

According to Collins, “All good-to-great companies began the process of finding a path to greatness by confronting the brutal facts of their current reality.”<sup>9</sup> When I first came to VABC three years ago the church thought it was a growing healthy church. It was not long, however, before I discovered VABC had been on a slow decline and was failing to assimilate and disciple new converts. The church has now come to a critical juncture where we must face the facts, no matter how tough they may be. If the members

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<sup>5</sup>Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don’t* (New York: Harper, 2001), 3.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 88.

of VABC can see that they have drifted away from the biblical model then we can begin to refocus by getting back to the biblical mandate of making disciples. Collins makes clear, “You absolutely cannot make a series of good decisions without first confronting the brutal facts. The good-to-great companies operated in accordance with this principle, and the comparison companies did not.”<sup>10</sup>

Just uncovering the facts is not enough to launch VABC to the breakthrough point. After uncovering the brutal facts a problem can arise by members deciding to turn a blind eye to reality, opting to keep everything the same because of their fear of unwanted change. According to Thom Rainer, “One of the key reasons many churches today are in a slow but deadly path of erosion is the failure of the people to accept that the church is in trouble and that immediate changes are needed.”<sup>11</sup> Discovering the brutal facts can lead to change, and change for older congregations can be hard to accept. According to Collins, turning a blind eye was a problem in some of the companies he studied as well. Collins gives the example of Roy Ash, who at one time was CEO of Addressograph. Ash turned “a blind eye to any reality inconsistent with his own vision of the world.”<sup>12</sup> For VABC, ignoring the current reality is not an option. Unless we change and begin focusing outwardly, VABC will continue to decline and eventually die.

A key to overcoming the tendency of ignoring the facts, according to Collins, is developing an atmosphere where the truth can be heard. Collins writes, “Yes, leadership is about vision. But leadership is equally about creating a climate where the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>11</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make The Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 71.

<sup>12</sup>Collins, *Good to Great*, 71.

truth is heard and the brutal facts confronted.”<sup>13</sup> For the membership of VABC, suggesting that the church has been in decline for a number of years can be received as blaming the former leadership. Consequently, any change could be perceived as implying that the former leadership did not do it right. Because of this potential misunderstanding, the visioning team focused the congregation on where God was leading VABC for her present and future ministries, instead of distracting the people with accusations and assigning blame. Collins continues, “You should almost never need to assign blame but need only to search for understanding and learning.”<sup>14</sup> The goal is to understand the current realities and learn how to transition the church to a healthy understanding of the community and how VABC can reach the community.

It is hard not to become despairing when the facts are less than appealing. Once the “brutal facts” are accepted as reality then the challenge becomes encouraging everyone regarding the possibilities of positive change. VABC can move from good-to-great. As Collins explains, every organization who moves from good-to-great must maintain “an unwavering faith in the endgame, and a commitment to prevail as a great company despite the brutal facts.”<sup>15</sup> Collins uses Admiral Jim Stockdale to illustrate a willingness to stay faithful to the task in difficult circumstances. Stockdale was a prisoner during the Vietnam War. According to Collins, “Stockdale was tortured over twenty

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 78. Collins suggest four ways to create an atmosphere where the truth can be confronted: (1) “Lead with questions, not answers,” (2) “Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion,” (3) “Conduct autopsies, without blame,” and (4) “Build ‘red flag’ mechanisms.” Ibid. All four are pertinent to VABC, but I chose to only address the third, “conduct autopsies without blame,” because it is the most relevant to the current situation at VABC.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 83.

times during his eight-year imprisonment from 1965 to 1973, Stockdale lived out the war without any prisoner’s rights, no set release date, and no certainty as to whether he would even survive to see his family again.”<sup>16</sup> Even though Stockdale faced such horrific circumstances he was still able to keep faith in his release. Collins continues,

In wrestling with life challenges, the Stockdale Paradox (you must retain faith you will prevail in the end and you must also confront the most brutal facts of your current reality) has proved powerful for coming back from difficulties not weakened, but stronger – not just for me, but for all those who’ve learned the lesson and tried to apply it.<sup>17</sup>

The VABC vision team will face difficult times in trying to move the church forward. Learning from the Stockdale Paradox will help VABC to remember to keep the faith. The team must have the willingness to confront the “brutal facts” of the current reality and at the same time stay focused on the vision of VABC—becoming a vibrant church effecting gospel growth in southeast Evansville.

The vision team needed to believe that God had a plan for VABC and be willing to lead in change, even in the face of crisis. Once the team had discovered that VABC was in need of change in order to see gospel growth in southeast Evansville, we then needed to develop a compelling vision in line with the Word of God.<sup>18</sup> Casting the new vision in light of the “brutal facts” provided clarity and encouraged the congregation to buy into the visioning team’s presentation. Aubrey Malphurs explains, “Often the vision statement alone is able to sufficiently convey the dream. But other factors will help

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>18</sup>The vision was developed by the visioning team and myself. The goal was that the vision was not coming just from me, but from the leadership of VABC. This created a better environment for buy-in. I addressed the importance of the senior pastor not being the sole vision developer more in the next section, “Vision from the Bottom Up.”

to clarify the vision as well. One is the necessity of presenting the vision within the context of a critical deficiency or problem with the status quo.”<sup>19</sup> If the visioning team helped to clarify the crisis and present a biblical way forward, then the congregation was expected to buy in.

### **Vision from the Bottom Up**

Building vision in an established church requires an examination of three areas: the passion of the pastor, the gifting of the congregation, and the needs of the community. Speaking as a pastor, it is easier just to let everyone know what my vision is and expect them to get on board. However, Rainer and Lawless in *Eating the Elephant* warn against this type of top down approach to vision development: “The pastor who unilaterally determines the vision of the church without any awareness of the spiritual giftedness and passions of the people is headed for trouble.”<sup>20</sup> Instead of unilateral vision casting, Thom Rainer in *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap*, champions all three areas as components in vision discovery. *Breakout Churches* presents a case study involving over 50,000 churches in America reporting the process for which some were able to leap beyond mediocrity.<sup>21</sup> One of the foundational areas in which many churches were able to move beyond mediocrity was how they discovered vision.

In Rainer’s study, the common pattern of the churches that “broke out” was not an elaborate plan to discover and communicate a vision, instead, these churches demonstrated a combination of passionate leadership, gift-validating congregations, and

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<sup>19</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 88.

<sup>20</sup>Rainer and Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 40.

<sup>21</sup>Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 14.

outward community focus. Rainer designates the pattern as the Vision Intersection Profile.<sup>22</sup> He argues that vision should originate where all three components overlap.

Rainer argues,

Not all of the leader's passions are the same as the congregation's gifts and passions, but some are. Not all of the community's needs are the same as the intersection of the leader's and congregation's passions, but some are. When all three points intersect, the church knows its vision.<sup>23</sup>

Following Rainer's logic, a close investigation into all three parts is warranted in order to successfully develop and cast vision at VABC.

The first part of the Vision Intersection Profile (VIP) is the passion(s) of the leadership. Although the passion of the leadership cannot be the sole driving force for vision discovery, it is a key component. Rainer contends that leaders should have passion for the specific ministry in which they serve: "Breakout leaders did have personal ambitions, but they more often spoke of their ambitions for the churches they served."<sup>24</sup>

It is important for the pastor as well as other leaders to clearly and regularly convey their passion for ministry in order to keep the church laser-focused and moving in the right direction. Rainer explains,

When leaders in a church are passionately clear about their vision, two inevitable results transpire. First, some will not be attracted to such a vision and will not join the congregation. If they are members, they will probably leave to find a church that is better fit for their gifts and passions. Second, others will be attracted to the church because it reflects at least an aspect of their gifts and passions. The result is a congregation that is very unified in its vision and ministries.

The next component of the VIP is the passion/gift of the congregation. The members of VABC need to be released to follow their passion for ministry. The church is

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 49.

meant to be more than a bus with the pastor as the driver. It is meant to be a body with many parts serving their individual roles while complementing the body as a whole (Eph 4:1-16). In order to move the members beyond being spectators of the leadership's performance, they must believe their gifts for ministry are also important to the body of VABC. Rainer adds, "The breakout churches simply created an atmosphere of permission that allowed members to follow their passions and desires for ministry."<sup>25</sup> The key passions that should be focused on for ministry are those that overlap between the leadership and membership. Once members begin expressing their passions for ministry it is important for the leadership to recognize where the overlap of passions exist and then pursue only those passions in common.

The next component of the VIP is the needs of the community. Not all of the communities needs will be able to be met. In an area like southeast Evansville (lower income, broken, and drug-stricken homes) the needs can be overwhelming. VABC cannot be, according to Rainer, "an island in a community of needs."<sup>26</sup> Rainer goes on to explain, "There can be no vision without a clear discernment of the community's needs. And there can be no discernment of the community's needs without a passion for the community."<sup>27</sup> Southeast Evansville needs to hear the gospel proclaimed loudly. Deeds or meeting community needs often provide a gateway to speak the gospel to those who are in need. VABC can be richly blessed by seeing beyond the walls and discovering the people wondering in the dessert of a dry and broken land. The gospel is powerful enough to bring new life not only to VABC but also to the community surrounding it.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.



There will be opportunity for many ministries to be implemented by VABC; however, we must be willing to say no to ministries that do not fit within the intersection of all the three components of the VIP factor. Not only will we need to be able to say no to some ministries, but, we will also need to strive to maintain a greater standard of excellence in the ministries that we do decide to implement. Rainer writes, “A clear implication of the VIP factor is that visionary churches choose only to pursue a few areas where they can excel. They do not attempt to do everything.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Building Vision**

Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson co-authored the book *Come Back Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too*. The purpose of their book was to shed light on how churches that are plateaued or declining can revitalize in order to regain healthy evangelistic growth. Stetzer and Dodson discovered that a compelling vision was important in churches that were able to reverse the decline or move the churches off the plateau to a new stage of growth.<sup>29</sup>

Nehemiah offers one of the greatest examples of vision building found in the pages of Scripture. The people in Nehemiah’s day were devastated by war and captivity. Their sacred city Jerusalem lay in ruins. Although an attempt had been made to rebuild the walls, it had failed. The news traveled to Nehemiah that the walls lay in destruction once again. The devastating news became a catalyst for intense prayer pleading for God to allow the rebuilding of the walls. As mentioned in chapter 2 of this project, God gave Nehemiah the vision and fortitude to carry out God’s plan for Jerusalem. The brutal facts

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<sup>28</sup>Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 128.

<sup>29</sup>Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 48.

of Jerusalem's ruin and broken walls were a source of motivation for Nehemiah to develop a compelling vision. The compelling vision led to the rebuilding of the gates and walls surrounding the sacred city. The children of God had no vision until God communicated it through Nehemiah. God's vision delivered through Nehemiah provided motivation for the people to unite, working to rebuild.<sup>30</sup> As for Nehemiah, a clear and compelling vision, according to comeback leaders, was foundational in the revitalization of their churches.<sup>31</sup> In order for transformation to take place at VABC we must develop a vision that is compelling and fosters buy-in from the congregation. Malphurs explains,

Visions are exciting and they energize people. They ignite a spark- the excitement that lifts a ministry organization out of the mundane. They supply the fuel that lights the fire under a congregation- leaders are able to stop putting out fires and start setting a few. A vision from God has the potential to turn a maintenance mentality into a ministry mentality.<sup>32</sup>

With no vision for ministry, VABC had no driving force to compel believers into ministering the gospel both inside as well as outside the church. A compelling vision can deliver a clear sense of "divine purpose" that becomes the driving force for ministry.

According to Mulphurs,

The right vision creates meaning in people's lives, providing them with a cause and giving them a sense of divine purpose. They are a part of something bigger than themselves, something great that God is accomplishing at this time and place in history.<sup>33</sup>

Unless the church sees itself as more than a building, and a nostalgic history, it will be a

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<sup>30</sup>"People only 'get on board' when they see the boat. God uses this vision to help us commit our time, talent and treasure to the cause." Ibid., 46.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>32</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 146-47.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 147.

difficult task to motivate the membership to unite and begin working toward penetrating the surrounding darkness with the gospel. However, when a church sees itself as a part of a revolution and accomplishing great things for God, people do not need to be constantly encouraged towards ministry; they will desire to be involved in ministry because they feel they can make a difference. Along these lines, Andy Stanley writes,

Vision carries with it a sense of conviction. Anyone with a vision will tell you this is not merely something that *could* be done. This is something that *should* be done. . . . It is this element that catapults men and women out of the realm of passive concern and into action.<sup>34</sup>

VABC had to believe that it could make a difference. A compelling vision can help people see the big picture of ministry and how one church can make a difference.

Malphurs illustrates,

A wide gap exists in terms of commitment and dedication to God and a sense of personal significance between one member who, when asked what he or she does, replies, “I am a teacher” and another, who may have the same ministry, answers, “I am changing the life course for a class of adolescents who will someday accomplish great things for Christ.”<sup>35</sup>

Not only does a compelling vision provide a “divine purpose” it also motivates people to keep moving toward the big picture even in the face of the pain that sometimes can be experienced in ministry. A compelling vision sustains ministry. Mulphurs explains, “It [compelling vision] encourages people to look beyond the mundane and the pain of ministry. It keeps a picture in front of them that distracts from what is and announces what could be. It is the glue that holds the church together in turbulent times.”<sup>36</sup> Ministry

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<sup>34</sup>Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God’s Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*, annotated ed. (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2005), 17. Emphasis original.

<sup>35</sup>Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 147.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 148.

is messy because believers live in a world that is groaning under the condemnation of sin (Rom 8:19-23). When the church focuses on a divinely inspired vision it provides motivation to keep moving forward. Believers need to know there is a larger plan and that their vision fits in the greater context of everything God is doing. Stanley writes, “God-inspired visions ultimately lead back to God. Regardless of our role, we are never the focal point of genuine God-ordained vision. He is.”<sup>37</sup> When the church seeks God through prayer and allows the Word of God to provide the foundation for the vision it becomes more than just championing a statement. The vision allows the church to recognize the big picture of what God is accomplishing in our community. Stetzer and Dodson explain, “Vision is not adhering to statements—it is recognizing and committing to something bigger than you.”<sup>38</sup>

It was a struggle to get workers to serve in the various ministries of VABC. A compelling vision will raised the commitment level by calling people to the front lines in a cosmic battle for the community. Vision not only allows people to see the bigger picture moving them forward, even when facing trials, but it also raises expectations. When there is no vision people grow lax and fail to see the eternal significance of ministry effecting gospel growth in their community. According to Stetzer and Dodson, “People will follow vision because they are interested in committing to something worthwhile. Yet, so often our churches do not call people to life-changing visions and are surprised that the commitment level is so low.”<sup>39</sup> The vision for VABC needs to be both something

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<sup>37</sup>Stanley, *Visioneering*, 65.

<sup>38</sup>Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 46.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

the members can get excited about and something that calls them to a life-changing commitment to serving God.

### **Communicating Vision**

Thus far, the majority of chapter 3 has dealt with vision development; however, if a well-developed vision is not communicated equally as well then it will fail to fulfill its intended purpose. The purpose of developing and casting a new vision at VABC is to refocus attention and efforts on the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. If a new vision was not cast effectively, all the effort put forth to develop that vision would be lost.

In reality there are obstacles in implementing vision, and being prepared for those obstacles go a long way in assuring triumph. John Kotter and Lorne Whitehead in *Buy-In: Saving Your Good Ideas from Getting Shot Down*, address the challenge of keeping good ideas from losing forward mobility:

You or your allies present the plan. You present it well. Then, along with thoughtful issues being raised, come the confounding questions, inane comments, and verbal bullets—either directly at you or, even worse, behind your back. It matters not that the idea is needed, insightful, innovative, and logical. It matters not if the issues involved are extremely important to a business, and individual, or even a nation. The proposal is still shot down, or is accepted but without sufficient support to gain all of its true benefits, or slowly dies a sad death.<sup>40</sup>

*Buy-In* covers twenty-four areas of conflict that can cause a good idea to lose support and die. Out of those twenty-four areas, three apply directly to the traditional church environment: (1) why Change? (2) you're implying that we've been failing! (3)

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<sup>40</sup>John P. Kotter and Lorne A. Whitehead, *Buy-In: Saving Your Good Idea from Getting Shot Down* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2010), 185.

can we really do this?<sup>41</sup> Along with the three areas of conflict, this section deals with the urgent need to communicate clearly and regularly.

### **Why Change**

This first challenge comes from the fear of change or unwillingness to recognize that change is needed. It seems sometimes that change is one of the only constraints, but humans never get used to it. Rainer and Lawless write, “While some of the points are speculative, the central theme is the same: churches have been dealing with change since Pentecost.”<sup>42</sup> Imagine how much change had to take place when 3,000 people were added to the church in one day (Acts 2:41-47)? It is not an issue of whether or not there will be change but how will people deal with the change that is inevitable. Rainer and Lawless continue, “One of the most important factors in the growth of a church is the manner in which its leaders initiate and handle change. It is especially critical in the traditional church.”<sup>43</sup>

When a new vision was proposed by the vision team, immediately the broader church recognized that in order to embrace that vision VABC needed to change. Once the realization was made that new vision required change, the members of VABC may have been tempted to think, “We have never done this in the past and things have always worked out okay.”<sup>44</sup> Kotter and Whitehead warn that the question of “why change” “can shoot down a genuinely fabulous idea.” I as pastor, as well as the visioning team, had to

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<sup>41</sup>The full list of twenty-four areas of conflict are located in Kotter and Whitehead, *Buy-In*, 84-85.

<sup>42</sup>Rainer and Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 158.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Kotter and Whitehead, *Buy-In*, 108.

have an answer to the question “why change.” But answering the question why change is not the only issue to address. Kotter and Whitehead continue, “Anyone who clearly sees the need for change can hear attack number 1 [why change] as moronic and treat the person asking the question accordingly—which is a big mistake.”<sup>45</sup> When leading VABC to embrace new vision it had to be done with respect and concern for those who oppose change. We were dealing with real people with real emotions. Rainer and Lawless explain, “When we lead traditional churches to change, we must respect and understand the feelings of those who resist change, Yet, at the same time, if the issue at stake is truly one of eternal importance, we must press on.”<sup>46</sup>

When responding to the question of “why change,” it is best not to attack the people treating them like morons, but to answer with simple clear statements that reveal the facts in a loving way. The visioning team’s answer should sound something like this: “VABC has been in slow decline for the last fifteen years. We have seen other churches, who clearly preached the gospel, die. Why? Because they failed to adapt to meet the needs of the community around them and slowly declined until they were forced to close their doors.”<sup>47</sup> We want to be a faithful church that proclaims the gospel for generations to come; therefore, we must adapt to our community and at the same time remain true to the word of God. Kotter and Whitehead conclude,

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Rainer and Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 159.

<sup>47</sup>In 2010, Calvary Baptist Church closed its doors and donated the building to our local association. At one time, Calvary was one of the largest churches in Evansville and was even used by God to help plant Vann Avenue Baptist Church. It was considered a wealthy church with members who were lawyers and doctors. The community changed and has become one of the poorest neighborhoods in Evansville. The church failed to change with its community and died. The local association supported a plant in the building renaming the church Center of Hope. Center of Hope now has 225 in worship. Unfortunately, former Calvary and now Center of Hope provide an excellent illustration.

The best response seems to be something simple, accurate, and basic: essentially, ‘life evolves, and to continue to succeed, we must adapt.’ Everyone knows this fact (the Roman Empire and General Motors being cases in point) and can be gently reminded, if necessary, with well-known examples or more specific ones known by the audience.<sup>48</sup>

### **Are You Implying We Have Been Failing?**

One of the addressed problems is that of understanding the “brutal facts” when communicating for new vision. An entirely different problem, however, arises when the “brutal facts” are made clear. Communicating that the church has not been accomplishing what they thought they were accomplishing leads to the next logical discovery, “You’re implying that we’ve been failing.”<sup>49</sup>

As a relatively new pastor, it was even more important that the visioning team did not imply that the former leadership failed. If the team made this error, emotions would run high and a counter-attack would be immanent.<sup>50</sup> Instead, the team needed to clearly and regularly communicate that developing a new vision for the future was not in any way an attack on the former pastor or leadership. We could not in any way imply someone was not doing their job or failed to do their job. The visioning team had to communicate that new vision was needed in order to keep up with the ever-changing culture.<sup>51</sup> As the community changes around the church, the church must change to remain relative to the community. Kotter and Whitehead suggest,

One effective response to this attack is to reposition either-or with both-can-be-true. There is nothing inconsistent with the assumption that people are competent and your proposal is needed. More is needed than their personal competence to make the

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<sup>48</sup>Kotter and Whitehead, *Buy-In*, 109.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*



activity or organization function well. . . . And the “more” or at least a part of it, is your idea or proposal.<sup>52</sup>

Any good leader will say that no one can please everyone. Some will always oppose leadership. Learning to deal with opposition can be hard, and preparation should be made in advance to deal with it. We must love the people and focus on winning the minds of the relevant, attentive people with simple, clear, and common sense responses. This goes a long way in receiving buy-in.<sup>53</sup>

### **Can We Really Do This?**

As part of the journey to buying-in to the new vision of VABC, the next question may be, “Can we really do this?” As stated earlier, the goal of developing and casting a GCV (Great Commission Vision) was to move the membership from a school bus model, where the pastor and staff are doing all the work and everyone else enjoying the ride, to an every member a minister model.

The ministry model of every member ministering sounds like a lot of work. Younger families are involved in so many activities, (sports, academics, and family involvement) that they do not have time to add anything else to their busy schedules. This busyness tends to leave older generations to bear the brunt of the ministry load. Senior adults can be an asset to the ministry. VABC is blessed to have many “assets” because of the age of the congregation; however, senior adults could also rely on work they once did in the church and pass the responsibility on to the younger generations. If each segment of the congregation relies on someone else, then no one is left to commit to the responsibility of impacting the community with the gospel.

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 103.

According to Kotter and Whitehead, the attacks of “this seems too hard! [or] I’m not sure we are up for it . . . can be powerful when people are genuinely feeling overworked and underpaid.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the visioning team should acknowledge that carrying out the new vision, which involves meeting the needs of the community, will be hard work. When people come together with a common goal they can accomplish wonderful things. Kotter and Whitehead write, “History shows us that inspired groups—even just a little bit inspired—can achieve more than would seem to be possible.”<sup>55</sup> Admitting the reality of VABC’s current condition and committing to fulfilling the Great Commission will require work and sacrifice. We must revert back to the vision God laid on VABC to accomplish. We needed to focus on the positive of the ministry opportunities available. It was essential that we were faithful in calling for commitment to carry out the Great Commission in southeast Evansville. We must also publicly celebrate each victory that is accomplished under the new vision. These mini-victories would go a long way toward encouraging the forward mobility of gospel penetration. The obstacles to VABC pursuing new vision, according to Kotter and Whitehead “can both raise our energy levels and motivate us to eliminate wasted time.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Communicating Clearly and Regularly**

Being prepared for the attacks that may come is important for insuring buy-in, but so often it is easy to leave out the most important tool, communication. Kotter and Whitehead explain,

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 159.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

The single biggest mistake that people make when trying to communicate a new vision of change, and strategies for achieving that vision, is under-communicating by a great deal. What seems like a lot of communication to those driving a change effort can, in fact, be woefully little, for perfectly understanding reasons<sup>57</sup>

Every method of communication should be utilized to establish buy-in for the new vision by the visioning team. Relentlessly, sending mail-outs, publishing bulletin inserts, engaging in one on one conversations, addressing vision in public meetings as well in sermons went a long way to acquiring buy-in. Tim Keller, in *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* explains, “From the pulpit, in classes, by word of mouth, it must be communicated that every layperson is a minister, and that ministry is finding needs and meeting them with the goal of the spread of the kingship of Christ.”<sup>58</sup> We would bring the gospel to hurting and broken people by consistently placing the vision for VABC before the people and celebrating every victory along the way. New vision would go a long way toward encouraging every member of VABC to minister in southeast Evansville

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to narrow the focus of vision development and casting to specific challenges that may have been encountered in implementing a GCV at VABC. In review, chapter 3 has discussed how vision is developed and the components involved in that process. These components are just as important as vision itself. Chapter 3 also examined the importance of accepting the “brutal facts” and making an effort to overcome and bring new vision. Further, this chapter introduced the Vision Intersection Profile. All three areas, passion of the leadership, passion of the congregation, and

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 185.

<sup>58</sup>Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 156.

community needs, are determining factors in developing vision and each area must be determined intentionally. Chapter 3 also examined the necessity and benefits of developing a compelling vision. A compelling vision creates a sense of “divine purpose” that believers are a part of a larger plan or bigger picture. It also helps to motivate people to keep on keeping on even in light of difficulties sometimes associated with ministry, and raises commitment levels. Last, this chapter spent time working through the possible objections to a new vision. Each objection must be answered, treating the objecting party with respect and communicating clearly for buy-in.

Chapter 4 presents how the vision team participated in a fifteen week revisioning process for VABC. Through this process the team gained knowledge about the brutal facts of VABC, survey the community to determine community needs, and communicate their passion for ministry. All the data was analyzed and formed into a new vision for VABC that was presented to the congregation.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PROJECT

As the news spread of President Barack Obama's re-election, many congregants from VABC developed a sense of hopelessness that the United States may never regain a culture of biblical morality.<sup>1</sup> Some members even predicted that religious liberty would soon begin to erode. However, one cannot be certain what the future holds for the United States; neither can one discern the morality of coming administrations or governmental policies. Despite this governmental relapse, as believers the hope is not found in the majority opinion or ultimately in human government. In his Word, God communicates under the assumption that his church will usually be on the front lines of cultural change, working against the immoral majority.

When churches are faithful to carry out the Great Commission, culture will be changed and the visible fruit will be seen not only during election time. Nancy Pearcey claims that Christians have been infatuated with politics for too long and that the church needs to get back to God's way of penetrating cultural darkness. She explains, "The most effective work is done by ordinary Christians fulfilling God's calling to reform culture within their local spheres of influence – their families, churches, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, professional organizations, and civic institutions."<sup>2</sup> An overzealous

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<sup>1</sup>Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 187.

<sup>2</sup>Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 19.

infatuation with politics is one of the ways that churches have failed to continue to be effective in their gospel witness. Developing a new vision at VABC that works to build the Kingdom of Christ more than political coalitions was vital in the process of seeing culture penetrated and transformed by the good news of the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

From the beginning, this project was designed to call VABC back to being a community-impacting, gospel-preaching church. During its 65 years in Evansville the church has failed to keep up with the changing community. VABC has never stated aloud that it does not desire to reach the community in which it resides; however, its failure to live with intentionality has resulted in ineffectiveness. Additionally, it seems that the church is intimidated by the new demographics of the immediate community and prefers to reach the types of people it has always reached. We can revision to reach those that God has brought to us, or, we can die.

How could VABC go about developing a new vision for its community? In order to effectively develop and cast a GCV there needed to be a good team of individuals that represented the basic values and culture of VABC. As an established church, the visioning process should not be a top down delegation, but rather a vision that has gripped and that flows from the heart of the congregation.<sup>4</sup> Lawless and Rainer conclude, “The wise ‘coach’ develops his strategy for the ‘team’ according to the ‘talent’ already present.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Political coalitions have not been very noticeable in the past, but as the political landscape becomes more liberal and less biblical the more VABC’s members spend focusing on politics and become distracted from the Great Commission.

<sup>4</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Charles E. Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Pinnacle, 2003), 40.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

## **Implementing the Project**

### **Week 1: Recruiting**

During the week of August 26, 2012, I began recruiting the vision team. I asked 20 people to serve on the team, and 16 commit to serve. The vision team began meeting on September 2, 2012 and the last meeting was on December 2, 2012. The objective of the vision team was to accomplish three strategic goals to move VABC to develop a vision for a community impacting ministry. The goals for the committee were (1) discover the core values of VABC, (2) identify the purpose for which VABC exists, and (3) strengthen VABC's community outreach by connecting the felt needs of southeast Evansville to the ministry gifts of the members at Vann Avenue.

The team was made up of a good mix from the congregation: 5 deacons and their wives, the Children's Coordinator, the Worship Pastor and his wife, the Adult co-ed (50 and up) Sunday school teacher and his wife, and the Saved to Serve (60 and up) women's Sunday school teacher. The age range represented the congregation's age range with 3 in their thirties, 3 in their forties, 6 in their sixties, 4 in their seventies, and 1 in his eighties.

### **Week 2: Gathering the Prayer Team and Focus Group**

Week 2 began by gathering the Great Commission prayer team. We took Ken Hemphill's cue: "Since vision originates with God, prayer should saturate this phase of the work."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, after gaining a commitment from a deacon's wife (one who had expressed a burden for prayer previously), I immediately asked her to organize a Great

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<sup>6</sup>Kenneth S. Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur: A Sunday School Growth Strategy for the 21st Century* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 57.

Commission prayer team. She agreed, and we set the prayer time for 5:30 every Sunday evening. I asked her to lead by praying intentionally for southeast Evansville to be penetrated with the gospel and that the vision team would discern God's vision for VABC as well as for me.

After encouragement in the importance of prayer, the team was instructed to meet and pray every Sunday evening at 5:30. The first meeting had 5 in attendance, however, the team quickly grew to 10, and the 10 remained faithful to gather and pray. One of their consistent prayers was for the vision team and that God would reveal his will to the church for the years ahead.

During week 2, I also recruited individuals from the vision team to serve in a focus group. The object of the focus group was to accomplish the fourth goal of this project: to help me to become a more effective leader by learning how to develop and cast a compelling Great Commission vision in an established church. Six team members committed to serve as a part of the focus group. During the first meeting I explained the goal of evaluating my leadership during the course of the project. I gave them a list of four questions to know what to be looking for. Throughout the following weeks they would be asked to fill out a questionnaire designed to evaluate my leadership and communication skills:

1. What are ways I can communicate more clearly?
2. In what ways have the vision team members displayed their understanding of the goal?
3. Do you have an understanding of the pastor's vision for VABC?
4. In your opinion, do others have an understanding of the pastor's vision?

### **Week 3: Assembly and Pre-Survey**

Week 3 was the first meeting consisting of the entire vision team. I gathered



the team to give them a detailed explanation of the task of developing a Great Commission vision. I began by drawing the graph titled “The Cycle of a Church” presented by Aubrey Malphurs in *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting*.<sup>7</sup> I then explained that every church has a life cycle. Churches are birthed through church planting and then they grow until eventually reaching a plateau and then decline until one day they die. According to Malphurs, “Organizations aren’t perpetual. Because they are made up of people, in time they die. It’s imperative that we keep in mind the fact that the church has always been and is still only one generation from extinction.”<sup>8</sup> I explained that VABC had been on a slow decline for the last fourteen years. They needed to know that if we desired to continue to be a church, we must become a community-impacting church. In order for VABC to recover from decline we first had to have an understanding of who we are and who our community is. I explained that we must have a clear and compelling vision as to why VABC exists. I then gave the charge that the vision team had been formed to first seek God through prayer and Bible study. Next, they were to discern who our community was. Then, the team was to put together a clear vision for the next five years.

Before the dismissal of the first meeting I passed out a survey for each vision team member to complete before they left (see appendix 1). The purpose of the survey was to provide a pre-evaluation of the vision team’s understanding of the purpose as well as their understanding of vision. The survey provided a baseline to gauge growth in understanding and participation in VABC’s mission and vision.

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<sup>7</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting: A Guide for Starting Any Kind of Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 11.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 10.

## **Week 4: Interviewing Community Servants**

During Week 4 I met with the vision team and explained to them the importance of understanding the community surrounding VABC. Knowing who the community is and the needs they have provides a starting point for a community-impacting ministry. One of the best ways to develop an understanding of community needs is to talk to community servants (police, business owners, managers, school teachers, counselors, principles, etc.), asking them to list and explain needs in the community. I narrowed the definition of the community to within a three-mile radius of the church in order to focus attention on the immediate community and not Evansville in general. I handed out a list of suggested questions that team members could ask local community servants. I then told the team to find three community servants and interview them to find out areas where the community struggles and where the community excels. I gave the team three weeks to complete the interviews. The list of suggested questions were

1. What is your greatest challenge in the community?
2. What appears to be the community's greatest fear?
3. What kind of church if any would people come to?
4. Can you describe a church that would meet this area's needs?
5. What would serve as the best benefit for our community?
6. What do you love about our community?
7. What do you not love about our community?
8. What is the greatest need in our community?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 121-35. Malphurs does not provide the list of questions, but I developed the list from the information provided.

## **Week 5-9: Sermon Series**

In week 5 I began a five-week sermon series entitled “Dare to Dream.” The series traced the subject of vision throughout its various mentions and illustrations in the Bible. Limiting the series to five weeks prevented me from covering every text about vision, so I included the ones that best spoke to the current condition at VABC. Each of the five messages addressed a particular issue preventing the church from being effective in reaching the lost with the gospel. During every message I reminded the church that we were in a visioning process and although not everyone could serve on the vision team everyone could be involved by praying for the team. I also included in every message Aubrey Malphurs’ definition of vision: “A clear, common, compelling picture of God’s future for his church.”<sup>10</sup> In each of the five sermons, I included in the application of the text a plea for unbelievers to turn from sin and turn to Christ for salvation, as well as a plea for believers to be obedient to carry out the Great Commission.

The first message in the “Dare to Dream” series was titled “Focus Points.” The text I used for this message was Matthew 28:16-20 and the theme of the message was on keeping the gospel as the main thing in the life and ministry of VABC. Using the analogy of football to illustrate the importance of staying focused on the Great Commission, I expounded the Great Commission as the mission of the church. God has called Christians to be faithful to make disciples. Making disciples requires the kind of evangelism that goes beyond someone making a profession of faith. I also encouraged the church to be willing to make course corrections—when what we have always done no longer works. I explained that effective ministry would require a team effort and that everyone could find a place to get involved in ministry. I closed by explaining that the church’s purpose was

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 100.

to glorify God by making him famous among the nations, starting in southeast Evansville (Ps 96:3).

For week 6, I preached sermon 2 in the series “Dare to Dream.” This second sermon was titled “Gospel Fire.” The text I used was Acts 1:6-8. I continued to address the need for every believer to be committed to obeying the Great Commission by getting involved in ministry at VABC. I used the analogy of how fast and hot forest fires spread and burn. I admonished the church to avoid gospel distractions. In Acts 1:6-7, the disciples asked Jesus when he would restore the kingdom. Jesus responded by focusing their attention on remaining faithful to the call of going. Using this principle, I encouraged the church not to get distracted by the election or politics. I encouraged participation in the election, but I continued to emphasize the Great Commission as the primary focus of every believer. I then explained that the power of the gospel does not lie completely within our abilities but in the power of the Holy Spirit. He must illumine hearts of their need for forgiveness and salvation in Christ Jesus. I also explained the geographical scope of the Great Commission. Jesus makes it clear that we are to be involved in taking the gospel to the world, and to commit to this call by taking the gospel across the street to our neighbors.

During week 6, the focus group also met for the second time to present their first evaluations of my communication and leadership. They offered helpful observations. One particularly helpful observation was that not everyone on the vision team had a clear picture of how a new vision would help the church recover gospel-centeredness. The focus group also suggested I share more with the congregation about the vision team. Several church members had questioned team members about the purpose and goal of the vision team, and the group felt that I could bring some clarity in that area.

For week 7, I delivered sermon 3 in the series “Dare to Dream.” The third

sermon I titled “Unified Front” from Ephesians 4:1-16. The issue addressed was the need for the body to function in unity. I explained that God calls believers to serve him as members of a local church. The first step to attaining unity was to belong to the body of VABC. I have heard VABC members use language that separates the responsibilities of the laity from the clergy, such as limiting ministry only for the clergy. In order to refute this misunderstanding I argued that every member is considered a minister. Kent Hughes gives a helpful clarification regarding this thought:

The bottom line for every Christian believer is that each of us should be involved in some kind of ministry. Praise God—many have created their own areas of service: to refugees, unwed mothers, the homeless, the elderly, the handicapped, the pornography battle, pro-life witness—to name a few.<sup>11</sup>

It was my intention to cause the members to envision themselves doing ministry in a way that matches their gifts and passions. I concluded that God had gifted the church with pastors/teachers for the equipping of the saints for work of the ministry and every member should be involved in building up the body (Eph 4:11-16).

Starting week 8 I delivered sermon 4. The text was Nehemiah 1:1-11 and the sermon was titled “Power Source.” I described the status of Jerusalem in time of Nehemiah and why he was heartbroken by the news that the walls had been destroyed. I then connected the state of Jerusalem with the current state of VABC. At one time we were more in number and had a greater impact on southeast Evansville. I then encouraged the congregation to develop a posture of prayer for the rebuilding of our beloved church. In order for VABC to regain losses experienced over the fourteen years, we had to move forward in a posture of dependence on God to work in and through our body. For Nehemiah, vision came through prayer. I admonished the congregation to spend time in

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<sup>11</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 135.

prayer asking God for his vision for the future ministry at VABC. Next, using the acronym ACTS (A-adoration, C-confession, T-thanksgiving, S-supplication) I explained the different aspects of prayer and the importance of a holistic prayer life. Last, I encouraged persistence in prayer by highlighting the fact that it took between four and five months before Nehemiah began to see God answer his prayers. Developing a vision for ministry and staying the course is not going to be a quick task, instead it requires time waiting on God to move and work in and through his church.

For week 9, I delivered the fifth and final sermon in the “Dare to Dream” series. The text to be expounded was Nehemiah 2:1-8 and the message was titled “Positioning for God to Move.” For the last message I reviewed all of the key points covered in the “Dare to Dream” series. I continued to encourage the church to be active participators in VABC’s vision and mission. I also reminded the congregation that seeing fruit from our labors would require patience. I encouraged VABC that not only should we be committed to pray for God to move, we also must be willing to wait for God to move. Next, I admonished the congregation to be ready to act when God does answer prayers. In order for VABC to be effective in assimilating new believers, we must have systems in place before and not after God brings an awakening to the community. I then transitioned to the benefit of having an established plan in place. I was able to walk through the text in Nehemiah and demonstrate each point and how God worked through Nehemiah.

### **Community Interview Results and Focus Group Meetings**

The vision team gathered prior to the evening worship service on October 21, 2012, to review and discuss the results from the community servant interviews. Each member shared about their experience of interviewing local community servants. As indicated in previous chapters, the church was unaware of the neighborhood surrounding

VABC. As a result, many team members were alarmed to discover the facts. For example, the greatest neighborhood challenge was crime and drug abuse. These challenges are linked together because crime was reported as being drug-related. As a result of high crime and drug abuse, the community servants reported that the community has a reputation of being dangerous and is often avoided by some who fear being robbed or attacked.

It was also during week 9 that the focus group met for the third time. The team presented their evaluations of the sermon series and offered suggestions on how I could improve my communication skills. The group provided encouragement when they noted that I had improved. They also reported that the vision team, as well as the church, had developed and grown in their understanding of the visioning process and the intended goal. It was at that point that I sensed a real excitement and anticipation for the completion of the vision process and presentation of the final results.

### **Week 10: Vision Workshop**

Week 10 consisted of the Saturday vision workshop.<sup>12</sup> In preparation for the workshop I positioned three round tables in a semi-circle with a Post-it note easel pad at the head of the semi-circle. Additionally, on each table I placed a copy of demographic studies and tapestry studies for the community, the results of the community servant interviews, and five blank sheets of easel Post-its.

I thought the order of the vision process (core values, mission, community study, vision, and suggested ministries) was important because it began with articulating who VABC is and then moved to discover who the community was. The vision team had

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<sup>12</sup>See appendix 3 for the full vision workshop agenda.

to have a firm grasp on the first three steps before they could begin to develop vision. I had come to the conclusion that vision is enriched when there is a healthy understanding of who we are and who our community is.

The workshop began at 9:00 A.M. with a light breakfast snack and a ice breaker. The goal for the ice breaker was to get everyone comfortable with sharing later in the day, when individual input was vital. The ice breaker involved writing a question designed to provide information about individual team members that everyone would not know. These questions were written on individual post-it notes. The note was then placed on the back of each team member as they arrived to hide it from being seen by the individual wearing it. For example the questions included information about early childhood events and other tidbits of information about the team members that were previously unknown by most of the other team members. The icebreaker proved to be a very entertaining and a helpful way to acclimate everyone to the team environment.

Following the ice breaker and breakfast I divided the team into three groups. I was careful to separate some husbands and wives. Previous experience had shown me that when both were together the wife tended to do all the work. To maximize input, I wanted complete participation from all team members. There were other facts that also helped determine how I divided the teams up. Two teams had members without their spouses present. I did not want to make them feel awkward about being alone so those two team members were placed in groups that had no couples. Again, the reasoning behind such careful placement of team members was to create an environment where all members would feel that their opinion was valued and that they felt comfortable to share it.

The first group assignment was for the teams to do SWOT analysis of the



current condition of VABC.<sup>13</sup> SWOT analysis is a quick and efficient way to examine current conditions such as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to an organization. After some time in their groups, each of them reported what they came up with. The result of the SWOT analysis is as follows:

1. Strengths—friendliness, size of our congregation, emphases on biblical teaching, nice facilities, good small group fellowship, location, and good programs.
2. Weaknesses—not enough workers, declining attendance, distance of membership, tithing, not reaching our community, surface relationships, and location.
3. Opportunities—room for growth, opportunities to serve, need for evangelism.
4. Threats—Satan, busyness, discouragement, gossip, being judgmental, lack of commitment, membership does not match the community.

After we discussed the SWOT analysis I explained that the one issue that drives the majority of the weaknesses and threats listed is that we do not have clearly articulated core values, mission, and vision. Because VABC does not have a clear identity represented by articulated core values, mission, and vision we have been struggling with low morale, and constant bickering over trivial matters of personal taste. I explained that the church's identity has been bound up in the former pastor, and since his retirement VABC has been struggling with an identity crisis. I then encouraged the team that the vision process was vital to the life of VABC.

Next, I continued to explain the importance of core values by having them open their Bibles to Acts 2:41-47. Acts 2 provided the perfect illustration of core values at work within the body of Christ. I examined each of these verses with the team while

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<sup>13</sup>I had the privilege of serving as a member of the local Baptist association's (South West Indiana Baptist Association) revisioning team. It was when I served on the revision team that I first discovered SWOT analysis. According to Idaho State University, SWOT analysis is contributed to Albert Humphrey at the Stanford Research Institute. "SWOT Analysis Resource Page," <http://www.isu.edu/acadaff/swot/index.shtml> (accessed March 12, 2013).

pointing out the core values the early church held.<sup>14</sup> I explained the need for biblical core values and the benefits they produce. According to Aubrey Malphurs, shared values “foster strong feelings of personal effectiveness, promote high levels of company loyalty, facilitate consensus about working hard and caring, and reduce levels of job stress and tension.”<sup>15</sup> After defining core values and explaining the need for them I passed out a core values audit to help the team members to determine core values.<sup>16</sup> The groups came up with five core values they felt are shared by VABC, and one value the church can aspire to attain. After each group was finished they explained to the team why they chose their particular values list. Then, from the list of eighteen values compiled by each group, the team chose five actual core values and one aspiring core value. The five core values chosen by the team were biblical preaching and teaching, prayer, Christ-centered, welcoming, stewardship. The team recognized that neither they nor the rest of the church had been faithful in carrying out the Great Commission. In response to the recognition of their lack of evangelism the team desired VABC as a whole to become faithful in obedience to the Great Commission, setting the one aspirational core value as evangelism.

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<sup>14</sup>Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts*, 69. Malphurs points out from Acts 2:41-47 that core values are biblical. I thought starting with Scripture would solidify the need for articulated core values.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>16</sup>“Helping Your Church Understand the Need for Core Values,” <http://storage.cloversites.com/congregationalchristianchurchesincanada/documents/Exploring%20Your%20Churchs%20Core%20Values.pdf> (accessed October 24, 2012) I chose this particular audit because instead of just having a list of words to pick from, it divided the core values into sections that addressed different areas in the church (for example, leadership, ministry, relationships, outreach, and worship). It also provided a brief description for each core value listed. I thought this particular format allowed for less confusion and provided a more accurate assessment of VABC’s core values.

After a brief break at 11:00 we moved on to the next section of purpose and mission development. I began by explaining the difference between purpose and mission. Malphurs offers a helpful distinction between the two: “Purpose and mission answers two different questions. The purpose is the reason the church exists—to glorify God. The mission is what the church is supposed to be doing—making disciples.”<sup>17</sup> According to Paul in the book Romans, our purpose is to glorify God: “So that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a united mind and voice” (Rom 15:6). The church’s purpose is established by God and does not change, it explains why we exist.<sup>18</sup> The purpose for VABC or the reason we exist is to glorify God. According to Malphurs, “The church serves the community so well in the name of Christ that the community acknowledges God is among us and wants to know more about Christ.”<sup>19</sup>

After clarifying the purpose I moved on to explain mission. Mission is connected to purpose by answering the question of how we will glorify God. Mission is constant and established by God in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). It is what the church is supposed to be doing. Matthew 28:19-20 commands the church to go and make disciples. It is not God’s plan for the church to be waiting on people to come to it but to go to them. I explained to the team that the mission statement should be brief and easy to remember.<sup>20</sup> Finally, I provided examples of mission statements and asked the team to come up with a mission statement for VABC. The mission statement the team came up with was “Vann Avenue Baptist Church exists to glorify God by seeking to know Christ

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<sup>17</sup>Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts*, 86.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 93.

and make Him known.”

The next step in the vision workshop was to look carefully at the demographics representative of VABC’s surrounding community. Each group had a one, three, and five-mile demographic available to study, as well as a tapestry study, and interview results. Most of the team members had never seen studies of this nature and had no clue as to how to pull out relevant information. In order to combat the team’s lack of familiarity I first explained each document and gave illustrations of how each study could be helpful in identifying who is in the community, along with potential ways to develop relationships that lead to gospel penetration. I then asked the team to spend fifteen minutes in their groups going through the information provided. Having gone over the interview results in a previous session, not all of the information was new to the team members; however, it still appeared that some of the team members were shocked by what the demographics revealed about the community. We spent an additional fifteen minutes talking about what all the information revealed and the implications for VABC.

In the next session I led the team in vision discovery. Malphurs defines vision “as a clear, common, compelling picture of God’s future for his church.”<sup>21</sup> Malphurs goes on to explain the importance of vision, “it provides energy, fosters risk taking, legitimizes leadership, empowers the church, sustains ministry, keeps the people looking forward, and motivates giving.”<sup>22</sup> There seemed to be a lot of confusion about the difference between vision and mission on behalf of the team. In response, I explained the difference between vision and mission using Moses as an illustration.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 97.

In Exodus 3:7-12, God delivers to Moses the mission of leading the people of Israel out of Egypt. Then, in verse 17, God delivers the vision of Israel dwelling in the “land flowing with milk and honey.”<sup>23</sup> Using Malphurs’s question posed in his chapter on vision, I asked the team “what kind of church could we be if God had his way?”<sup>24</sup> I continued with the question, “What will VABC look like in five years if we are faithful to carry out our mission and God blesses our effort?” I then continued by reading Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a Dream” speech to provide a perfect example of a powerful compelling vision. After reading the speech I assigned the team to work in their groups and come up with a vision for VABC. After they completed the assignment, one from each group shared their vision for VABC. Concluding the vision session I explained that I would combine all three groups’ visions into one vision that I would present it to the team at a later date.

The last session was designed to brainstorm possible ministries that fit our core values, mission, vision, and individual giftedness with our community. I recognized at this point that the team was tired and having trouble concentrating so I made a decision to have each group talk about ministry ideas and list them for later reference. Because some of the other sessions took longer than planned I did not want to go over on time. I wanted to be respectful of each team member’s sacrifice and their willingness to spend a full Saturday at church, so I released them on time. Upon dismissal, I explained that over the next three weeks I would review and combine all the data into a final presentation of the results of the workshop. They left knowing that we would work together to complete the last step.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 97.

### **Weeks 11-14: Core Values, Mission, and Vision Development**

For weeks 11 through 13, I worked on reviewing the data recovered from the vision workshop and completed a final draft of the core values, mission, and vision (see appendix 3). During week 14, the vision team met to review the final draft and complete the last session from the workshop. Each member of the team shared their area of passion and/or giftedness for ministry. I then connected their passion/giftedness with the suggested ministry ideas. For example, one of the members had displayed giftedness for working with children and a specific passion for at risk children and one of the suggested ministries was after school ministry. I explained that God's plan for his church is for every member to be involved in ministry, not just the paid minister, and God has equipped VABC to do ministry in our unique community. Several of the team members began commenting on how they could get involved in ministry using their unique giftedness and passion. The vision team displayed a real excitement for the future of VABC.

### **Week 15: Final Evaluations and Vision Celebration**

In week 15, I began bringing the vision process to a close by meeting with the focus group in order to receive final evaluations of my leadership and communication skills while implementing the visioning process. The last focus group meeting proved to be especially beneficial because the group was able to clearly articulate how I had grown over the last fifteen weeks in how I communicate as well as how often I communicate. I also met with the vision team to conduct post-surveys (see appendix 1). On the last day of the vision process, December 2, 2012 we had a day of celebration in the morning worship service. It included a presentation of an award for our previous years Lottie Moon offering presented by an official representative from the Baptist State Convention of

Indiana, as well as hearing from one of our missionaries in the International Missions Board. Following the morning worship service we had a church fellowship lunch. The lunch ended with the vision team's presentation of the results from the vision process.<sup>25</sup> It was truly a day of celebration and excitement. I am excited to see what God is going to do through VABC.

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<sup>25</sup>See appendix 5 for the final presentation of the core values, mission, and vision.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT EVALUATION

Often, the desire to be great transcends cultural mores and manifests itself in many different ways. In Mark 10:35-42, James and John urged Jesus to set them at his right and left hand in his Kingdom. They were asking Jesus if he would grant them greatness and honor. Jesus' instruction to James and John was atypical. He instructed them to become servants in order to be great (Mark 10:43-44). Likewise, Jesus calls every believer to that kind of radical love for their neighbor in Mark 12:21 by commanding that they love their neighbors as themselves. Not only did Jesus call all followers to radical obedience and love for their neighbor, he also perfectly illustrated servant leadership through his sacrificial death (1 John 4:10).

Jesus set the example for servant leadership throughout his earthly ministry. While addressing James and John, Jesus proclaimed, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life—a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus modeled a servant's heart through his obedience to the Father, even to death, in order to provide freedom from the condemnation sinners deserve. Because Jesus served sinners through a loving death, believers are now commanded to come and die to their own ambitions and follow Him to the nations.

The Great Commission provides a direct path of service for believers to love their neighbors by sharing the gospel and teaching them in order to make disciples. Throughout the course of this project, I set out to connect God's call to go and make disciples with the felt needs of VABC's community. I sought to accomplish that



connection by leading the church to be servants through the visioning process. This chapter evaluates the effectiveness of the project in seven steps. First, I evaluate the project's purpose. Second, I restate and evaluate the project's four goals. Third, I list and evaluate the strengths of the project. Fourth, I list and evaluate the weaknesses of the project. In the fifth part of the evaluation, I discuss what I would do differently if I were to do the project again. In the sixth section, I reflect theologically on what I learned about God and his church through the project. Finally, in the seventh section, I discuss some personal reflections on what I learned about myself through the process.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The primary purpose of the project was to unite and empower the members of Vann Avenue Baptist Church to be more effective in reaching and discipling the unchurched. Leading an established church to refocus its energy outside the walls of the church is vital to the church regaining a Great Commission emphasis.

Chuck Lawless and Thom Rainer describe churches without a clear and compelling vision:

Perhaps some church members could express that the church is in the 'business' of evangelism, worship, ministry, and discipleship. But very few members, including the church staff, could articulate how these purposes will be specifically accomplished by the church in its local context.<sup>1</sup>

After 65 years of ministry and the retirement of the former pastor, Vann Avenue Baptist Church has been struggling to maintain a focus on the Great Commission. The loss of focus was exemplified through the church's decrease in attendance and failure to notice

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<sup>1</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Bite-sized Steps to Achieve Long-Term Growth in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 15.

the change in community demographics. VABC needed a clear direction and new identity.

The project's purpose was successful with the completion of the vision statement. The church officially voted to adopt the vision statement presented by the vision team on December 5, 2012. The completion of the vision statement has helped the church to gain a new focus on ministry and a desire to see the vision fulfilled. It also provides a clear path for VABC to follow in the years ahead. It focuses the attention of the church on meeting the needs of the community and calls for every member's involvement in order to see the vision fulfilled. It calls VABC to be a Great Commission church by fulfilling the mandate to impact the community with the gospel.

Over the fifteen weeks of the project the church began to make a clear turn towards Great Commission ministry. The vision statement has helped to increase morale, which has in turn increased attendance. Attendance has increased from 160 to a consistent 200, and we even had a high attendance day with 273 in worship. Sunday school has also gained in attendance through the course of the project from an average of 145 to an average of 160. There has been an acknowledgement of the needs in the community and an attempt to reach out.<sup>2</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

In the beginning of the project I laid out four goals to be accomplished on completion of the project. The first goal was to discover the core values of VABC. I led the vision team in a core values audit. After explaining the importance of core values, I

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<sup>2</sup>One illustration of the church's growing desire to reach the community was that one of VABC's deacons donated seven turkeys and seven hams to be given to those in need. We were able to work along with one of the local elementary schools to distribute the hams and turkeys.

asked each team member to take the audit determining their personal core values. This was a great preparation before moving on to VABC's core values. Next the team was asked to determine the core values displayed through the members of VABC. The core values determined by the team represent the congregation well. For example, VABC has acquired over the years a rather large savings. We have half a million dollars divided up in different savings accounts and CDs. How money is spent at VABC is important and the church has a history of being frugal. Consequently, the team correctly determined stewardship as a core value.

The vision team was also asked to determine one core value to which the church could aspire. The team determined evangelism was a core value many desired to list, but most live in such a way that their lives do not display evangelism as a core value. The team's commitment to evangelism did show progress throughout the fifteen weeks. The pre-survey showed that 12.5 percent did not think that God holds them personally responsible for spreading the gospel.<sup>3</sup> Further, 43.8 percent said they disagreed with the statement that they regularly and intentionally shared the gospel.<sup>4</sup> During the course of the project the team recognized the need for each member of the congregation to become involved in evangelism and not rely on the paid staff. The post-survey displayed progress in the team's commitment to evangelism with 91.6 percent agreeing that God does hold them personally responsible for spreading the gospel and 25 percent agreed that they regularly and intentionally shared the gospel. The core values determined by the team provide a clear picture of the DNA displayed in the life of VABC. The list of core values is a great victory for the life of VABC. It provides a direction for ministry and determines

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<sup>3</sup>See question 5 in the survey displayed in appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup>See question 6 in the survey displayed in appendix. 2.

ministry alignment for the future.<sup>5</sup>

The second goal was to identify the purpose for which VABC exists. This goal was achieved through a study of several biblical passages (Rom 15:6, 1 Cor 6:20, 10:31) examining God's purpose for the church<sup>6</sup>. We agreed that the purpose of the church is to glorify God.<sup>7</sup> I then explained mission and looked at several Great Commission texts (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Next, after giving several examples, I asked the team to combine purpose and mission in order to come up with a mission statement. The team successfully came up with a short, memorable mission statement that conveys both purpose and mission.<sup>8</sup> The mission statement will serve to remind VABC of the reason for our existence and refocus the congregation on working toward accomplishing its God-given goal of making disciples.<sup>9</sup>

The third goal was to strengthen VABC's community outreach by connecting the felt needs of southeast Evansville to the ministry gifts of the members at VABC. The community servant interviews were extremely helpful in revealing the change in demographics of the community from when the church was established until the present. As the vision team began to hear each other's report from the interviews, the majority

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<sup>5</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting: a Guide for Starting Any Kind of Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 65.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Malphurs makes a distinction between purpose and mission. I agree with his argument that purpose is the reason that the church exists and the mission is what the church is to be doing. Malphurs contends the purpose of the church is to glorify God and the mission is encompassed in the Great commission. Ibid., 86.

<sup>8</sup>See the mission statement displayed under the heading "Mission" in appendix 4.

<sup>9</sup>Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts*, 85.

shifted in their thinking as to what ministries VABC needed to commit to in order to reach the community.

A major part of achieving the third goal was connecting the team member's unique God-given gifts to the community's dreams and needs. It was in the last meeting when I saw many of the team members gain understanding of how they personally can be involved in accomplishing VABC's vision. For example, one of the team members works at a local elementary school. She committed to use her love and passion for children in order to connect with local families to invite them to VABC. Her husband also expressed a passion for helping troubled kids and committed to spend a couple of hours a week tutoring children who have fallen behind. These two commitments have already led to an opportunity for VABC to minister to a local family going through a hard time by providing food and offering to meet other needs they may have. We are praying God will move in this family's life and we will see them commit to follow Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The fourth goal was a personal goal to become a more effective leader by learning how to develop and cast a compelling GCV in an established church. The goal was realized through the focus group's continual evaluation of my leadership. They helped me gain a greater understanding of my weaknesses as a leader, and through this process, I feel I have grown as a leader over the fifteen weeks of this project. The focus group helped me to understand that I often under-communicate. I have learned through this project that it takes multiple times and multiple ways of saying something before the majority understands. When first presented with the statement, "Our pastor's messages explain the vision of the church," 56.3 percent agreed; however, during the post-survey

75 percent agreed to the same statement.<sup>10</sup> The project has helped me to become a more effective communicator by helping me to understand the need to communicate, even to the point that I feel like I have over-communicated.

Not only did I learn where I can improve as a leader, I also learned where my strengths lie. The focus group encouraged me in my ability to plan and organize in carrying out a project. The climax of the project was the Saturday vision workshop. The focus group acknowledged that the workshop went very smoothly and was extremely helpful. They went on to say that everyone understood exactly what the team was to do and why it was needed. The team felt the success was in part due to the fact that I organized well for the event and because I had learned to communicate more effectively.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The greatest strength of the project was the progress the vision team made in recognizing who the community is and seeing the vision of what VABC could accomplish in terms of gospel impact when our attention is focused on community needs. The connection was also made regarding how each church member can play an important role in reaching the unchurched of the community. Several have stopped by my office to express their passion to see specific ministries in place in the community. For example, one gentleman from the congregation learned from the vision team the need for churches to provide help for those who are enslaved to drug addiction. He has offered, in connection with our Celebrate Recovery Class, to help start a shelter to minister to addicts. The team's excitement for the community and recognition that they are indeed

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<sup>10</sup>See statement 10 listed in the survey in appendix 2.

equipped to minister to the unchurched will continue to influence to the rest of the congregation.

An additional strength of the project was the team's development of a greater understanding of VABC's purpose for existence. When presented with the statement in the pre-survey, "If someone asked what the church's vision or purpose is I would know exactly what to say," only 31.3 percent agreed. When presented with the same statement in the post-survey 100 percent agreed.<sup>11</sup> Further, when asked to state the purpose for VABC in the pre-survey only one individual was able to communicate beyond generalities; however, when asked the same question in the post-survey, all but two were able to list VABC's new mission statement.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the formulation of the documents detailing the core values, purpose, and vision of VABC is a strength. The core values, purpose, and vision will serve as a foundation for a new member's class, but even before that class is developed, they can be a great help to the church and new members. The core values, purpose, and vision will be given to prospective members to assure them of the direction of VABC and to make sure their values and vision align. Being able to state early on who VABC is and what we will expect of members aids the church in ministry alignment for the future.<sup>13</sup>

Leading VABC to see beyond the church walls will continue to have a great impact on southeast Evansville in the years ahead. As Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson explain, "External focused churches have the advantage of deploying people into the

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<sup>11</sup>See statement 2 listed in the survey in appendix 2.

<sup>12</sup>See question 11 in the survey in appendix 2 and see heading "Mission" in order to see the mission statement in appendix 4.

<sup>13</sup>Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts*, 65.

community where they can be church to people through their love and service. Their light is not hidden under a bushel. No, they are their letting their light shine.”<sup>14</sup> By changing the focus of the church to the community, we have the opportunity to see God change lives through VABC’s gospel witness.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

I became aware of a significant weakness as the project came to a close. I had built into the project a component to reveal VABC’s actual community demographics. This information was revealed to the vision team members through the community servant interviews and demographic studies. These studies proved to be effective in leading the vision team to discover the local community; however, there was no component built into the project to relay the information to the congregation. I believe over time the vision team’s understanding of the community will spill over into the congregation, but until that happens on a large scale, many will fail to see the needs and continue in their indifferent state to penetrate the darkness in southeast Evansville. One of the ways I plan to address this weakness is to make available to the congregation the community servant interviews along with the demographic studies in order to help them better understand VABC’s community.

Though the project was limited in scope, I also failed to adequately connect vision and mission to an effective strategy. In my attempt to make a connection with strategy I brainstormed with the vision team regarding possible ministries VABC could be involved in so that we could fulfill the vision and meet community needs.<sup>15</sup> However,

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<sup>14</sup>Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), 28.

<sup>15</sup>See the suggested ministries in appendix 4.



nothing was in place to launch VABC into the suggested ministries. In order to correct for this shortcoming, I have organized a staff meeting to evaluate the suggested ministries to determine what ministries VABC can immediately launch.

Perhaps the most significant weakness of the project was a failed attempt to connect each vision team member's gifts and passions to a firm commitment from them to serve. I was successful at revealing how individual gifts and passions are starting places for service. The vision team even displayed excitement when discussing how they could be involved in ministry; serving in areas they were passionate about. But the project fell short in seeing the vision team members get involved in ministry areas in which they are passionate. Aubrey Malphurs contends, "According to Scripture, it should be the congregation (Eph. 4:11-13) who implement the strategy, for without their involvement, it won't happen and the church won't mature."<sup>16</sup> It is now the vision of VABC that every member be involved in ministry. What better place to see the fruition of the VABC's vision than with the vision team. In order to correct for this weakness I have started going to team members who have not committed to serve and encouraged them to get involved in the ministry areas they highlighted during the project.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

God has blessed through the planning and implementation of the project, so I do not want to take away from the many facets of the project that worked and served to improve VABC's commitment to gospel penetration in the southeast Evansville area, nevertheless, there are some things I would do differently. First, as previously mentioned under goal 4, repeated communication is necessary in order to effectively relay the

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<sup>16</sup>Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts*, 116.

intended information. Looking back, I would have spent more time communicating to the congregation about the vision team and the progress they were making throughout the project. I announced the beginning of the project at a business meeting asking the church to allow me to form the vision team. I also explained that the team would participate in a vision process to revision VABC. Nonetheless, attendance at monthly business meetings is not representative of the congregation as a whole. Many congregants who did not attend the business meeting were unsure of what the vision team was or of their purpose. In order to correct some of the confusion present in the congregation, it would have been better if I would have had a commissioning service to recognize each team member and explain to the congregation the intended purpose for the team and revisioning process.

Next, I was thrilled seeing the vision team discover the local community and plan for future ministry. Leading the team to discover the local community was a major part of overcoming a major hurdle to VABC moving forward with the gospel in southeast Evansville. Getting the team out into the community was important to accomplishing a major goal of this project. If I were to do the project again I would also plan a time for the vision team to share with the congregation the results and the process leading to those results. The team's report to the congregation would need to include a detailed explanation of the community servant interviews and demographic studies in order to reveal the local community to the congregation. Adding this additional step would help the congregation to discern its community and allow VABC to move at a faster pace toward fulfilling the new vision. I also could have invited some local community servants (policeman, social workers, and local school officials) to share in the service, to provide an indisputable picture of the community.

Although the Saturday visioning workshop was successful, it was probably too long. Towards the end of the workshop I noticed team members began to look tired and

they appeared to lose focus on the topic of discussion. If I were to repeat the project I would divide the workshop into two Saturday mornings, instead of one all-day event. Having two days to cover the agenda of the workshop would allow me to add an additional component. The additional component to the workshop would include helping team members better understand how they can get involved in specific ministries. This would help to correct the lack of commitment from the team members to immediately get involved in their ministry of interest.

### **Theological Reflections**

In the short amount of time since establishing vision for VABC we have seen four professions of faith and one new family added to the church from the local community. If the recent activity is a sign of what is to come, refocusing the church on the biblical mandate has been successful. It has helped to alleviate the inward focus of the church that has been holding VABC back from fulfilling the God-given call to be the salt and light to southeast Evansville.

This project has served to develop my understanding of the drift traditional churches can have toward being inward-focused. It also has served to increase my understanding as to why vision is needed to keep the church focus on the mission of making disciples. It is a part of believers' fallen nature that they drift away from God's call and plan for their lives. Christians have to be on guard to not to let sin in the door. Believers also have to be continually reminded of the goodness of God in their lives by maintaining faithful devotion to reading and meditating on the Word of God. If at any point they stop working out their salvation with fear and trembling they will lose spiritual ground (Phil 2:12). Because of human nature's fallen condition Christians have to be continually reminded of God's mercy and to love and "abide in Christ" (John 15:5). D. A. Carson argues that because the church often loses sight of the cross it is in need of a

constant reminder. Carson explains that the need to be reminded is why Christ instituted the Lord's Supper:

Without entering the lists on all that might be said about this clause, surely we can agree that one of its functions, as it is repeated in the ritual that Christ Jesus himself prescribed, is commemorative: "Do this in remembrance of me" (22:19). It is shocking that this should be necessary, in exactly the same way that it is shocking that a commemorative rite like the Passover should have been necessary. But history shows how quickly the people of God drift toward peripheral matters, and end up ignoring or denying the center. By a simple rite, Jesus wants his followers to come back to his death, his shed blood, his broken body, again and again and again.<sup>17</sup>

The church also has to have a constant reminder of the Great Commission, or it will become lackadaisical in reaching unbelievers with the gospel. For the church, a lost focus on reaching the unchurched reveals itself in lost vision for that church's community. George Barna lists the consequences of a lack of vision,

The observable consequences include people experiencing feelings of frustration and self-doubt, a slide into spiritual complacency, the degeneration of Christian service ministries, heightened selfishness and the acceptance of mediocrity within the church.<sup>18</sup>

The church will drift from its call to be outward-focused to being inward-focused.

Leading the church through the vision process serves to correct the inward drift and gets the church back in line with the Great Commission.

This project has also served to teach participants that they are held accountable by God for fulfilling the Great Commission, and that they are gifted for ministry. Getting the church to move from an inward focus to an outward one was due in part to the project's success in connecting personal giftedness with ministry. Kent Hughes explains,

The bottom line for every Christian believer is that each one of us should be

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<sup>17</sup>D. A. Carson, "Exodus 19; Luke 22; Job 37; 2 Corinthians 7," *For the Love of God*, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/loveofgod/?s=Luke+22%3A7-20> (accessed January 7, 2013).

<sup>18</sup>George Barna, *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry*, 3rd ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2009), 11.

involved in some kind of ministry. Praise God—many have created their own areas of service: to refugees, unwed mothers, the homeless, the elderly, the handicapped, the pornography battle, pro-life witness—to name a few. But those who have no place of service are aberrations. Every believer is to minister! We all have a part to play!<sup>19</sup>

Leading VABC to develop and cast a Great Commission vision has led to a greater desire on behalf of the congregation to get involved in ministry. Because of the church's propensity to drift away from God and his plan for their lives the church must be continually reminded and refocused on the Great Commission. Refocusing VABC has served to accomplish greater focus on the Great Commission, but it will not last. VABC, the same as all congregations, will need additional reminders in the years ahead.

### **Personal Reflections**

Pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree has been challenging, to say the least. It has served to stretch my abilities as a student and has forced me to depend on God. I personally believe I have grown closer to God throughout the degree process. I have taken steps to ensure that I have time daily to give to Bible reading and meditation. The process of planning and writing for the project has greatly increased my dependence on God in prayer. Writing has always been a struggle for me and by God's grace I have improved over the course of the D.Min. program. The anxiety produced with each assignment only found relief when I was enveloped in prayer and meditation on the Word. I have constantly been reminded that without God all things are impossible, and the opposite has proven true as well, with God all things are possible.

An additional benefit to pursuing a degree at the doctoral level has been the development of my time management skills. Being a full-time husband, father of two

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<sup>19</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 135.

wonderfully rambunctious boys, and serving as pastor at a traditional church in transition has consumed the majority of my time. Adding to an already hectic schedule the pursuit of a Doctor of Ministry degree has forced the development of time management skills. Although I still have room for improvement, developing time management skills will serve well in future endeavors.

Last, pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree has increased my hunger for learning. At the completion of the Master of Divinity degree I realized I still had much more room to grow. The desire to continue to grow as a leader led me to pursue an advanced degree. I have come to the realization that I must commit to carve out time to be continually reading and studying in order to remain sharp and relevant in ministry. The D.Min. program has given me many of the skills I need to remain committed to the discipline of life-long learning.

### **Conclusion**

The D.Min. program has challenged me, leading to personal growth and increased ability to lead God's church. I also recognize that I have much more room to grow. I am thankful for each seminar and for the chance to learn from each member of the cohort. This project has taught me much about vision in both the Old and New Testament and I have learned a great deal about leading the church through the vision-casting process. May God use this project to challenge pastors to embrace the need to continually evaluate the church's Great Commission focus. When embraced, this focus will prevent inward drift and indifference to the God-given mandate to go and make disciples.

## APPENDIX 1

### FIFTEEN-WEEK VISION TEAM SCHEDULE

#### **A. Five-week Preparation**

1. Aug 29<sup>th</sup> - Participants will be recruited based on participation in Leadership Greatness. This will form the vision team.
2. Sep 2<sup>nd</sup> - The focus group will be gathered and given personal leadership criteria and begin evaluation.
3. Sep 2<sup>nd</sup> - Participants will be formed into a Great Commission prayer team.
4. Sep 9<sup>th</sup> - Participants will complete a survey with questions such as “Why does VABC exist?” and “How well do we fulfill our purpose?”
5. Sep 16<sup>th</sup> - participants will begin conducting a survey of community needs.

#### **B. Five-week *Dare to Dream* Sermon series**

1. Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> - “Focus Points” - Matthew 28: 19-20
2. Sep 30<sup>th</sup> - focus group meeting two and sermon titled, “Gospel Fire” - Acts 1:8
3. Oct 7<sup>th</sup> - “Unified Front” - Ephesians 4:1-16
4. Oct 14<sup>th</sup> - “Power Source” – Nehemiah 1
5. Oct 21<sup>st</sup> - “Positioning for God to Move” – Nehemiah 2:1-6 and focus group meeting three.

#### **C. Vision Team will participate in Saturday Visioning workshop**

1. Oct 27<sup>th</sup> - Saturday Visioning workshop
2. Nov 4<sup>th</sup>-18th - organize and prepare for final presentation of the Core Values, Purpose Statement, Vision Statement, and Outreach project possibilities.
3. Nov 25<sup>th</sup> - present the visioning team final outcome.
4. Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> - meeting with focus group meeting four for final evaluation, and conducting post survey

## APPENDIX 2

### VISION TEAM SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the church members' understanding of key biblical and theological issues of evangelism and church growth. This research is being conducted by Eric Martin for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will need to complete the following survey by carefully shading in the appropriate bubble corresponding with each statement. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- I agree to participate  
 I do not agree to participate

1. Vann Avenue Baptist has a clear purpose.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Undecided
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

2. If someone asked what the churches vision or purpose was I would know exactly what to say.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Undecided
- Agree
- Strongly Agree



3. I know what a vision statement is.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Undecided
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
4. It is more important to meet the needs of the active members than to minister to those outside the church.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Undecided
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
5. God holds me personally responsible for spreading the gospel.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Undecided
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
6. I regularly and intentionally share the gospel.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Undecided
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree

7. I Believe Vann Avenue Baptist Church should have clearly written ministry objectives guiding all ministry activity.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Undecided
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

8. Our church adequately reaches the unsaved.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Undecided
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. I think our church is helpful to our community.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Undecided
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. Our pastor's messages explain the vision of the church.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Undecided
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

11. Why does Vann Avenue Baptist Church Exist?

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12. What do you consider the Church's greatest needs? List in order of importance.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3

### VISION WORKSHOP AGENDA

- I. Introduction of Visioning Process 9:00-10:00**
  - a. Ice Breaker game
  - b. SWOT Analyses of Vann Avenue
    - S** – Strengths
    - W** – Weaknesses
    - O** – Opportunities
    - T** – Threats
- II. Core Values Audit 10:00-10:45**
  - a. Defining Core Values – As its constant, passionate, biblical core beliefs that drive its ministry.
  - b. Understanding Why They are Important
  - c. Discovering Vann’s Core Values
- III. Purpose and Mission 11:00-11:45**
  - a. Defining Purpose – Glorify God Rom 15:6, I Cor 6:20, 10:31,
  - b. Developing Mission – Broad, brief, biblical statement of what the church is supposed to be doing
- IV. LUNCH including a CHICK-FIL-A Sandwich 12:00-12:30**
- V. Understanding Vann’s Community 12:30-1:00**
  - a. Survey Results
  - b. Tapestry Study
  - c. Demographics
- VI. Vision 1:00-1:45**
  - a. Defining Vision
  - b. Vision Illustrations
- VII. Brainstorm Strategies to Accomplish Vision 2:00-2:45**
  - a. Sharing Personal Passion/Giftedness
  - b. Connecting Community Needs to Personal Passion/Giftedness

## APPENDIX 4

### VISION TEAM REPORT

#### **Core Values:**

1. **Truth** – We at VABC (Vann Avenue Baptist Church) believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and value biblical teaching and preaching. God made himself known so we could know Him. Knowing God means knowing the Word of God. **II Timothy 3:16**
2. **Prayer** – We strive to make prayer a priority and believe it should be the mainstay of the church and all its ministries. **Acts 2:42**
3. **Christ-Centered** – We value Christ as the head of the church and recognize every activity comes under the Lordship of Christ. **Ephesians 5:22-33**
4. **Stewardship** – We believe it is important to be faithful with all of God’s blessings. This includes our responsibility to care for and support the work of God through the Church with time, talents, and resources. **Matthew 25:14-30**
5. **Welcoming** – We believe it is vital to belong to a loving church family. We make a concerted effort to make every guest in our services feel welcomed and eager to belong to the family of God at Vann. **I Corinthians 10:32-33**
6. **Evangelism** – We desire to reach all people by all means for Jesus Christ. **Matthew 28:18-20**

#### **Mission:**

VABC Exists to glorify God by seeking to know Christ and make Him known.

#### **Vision:**

We long to see one thousand or more active members unified under the common goal of impacting our community with real gospel change. We *dream* of a day when we need multiple services in order to accommodate for genuine gospel growth. We *dream* of strong men’s and women’s ministries, with members discipling members setting the pace for the life of VABC. We *dream* of being a church that reaches out to all people groups desiring to see them know the Lord and serve at VABC. We believe every member is vital to the life of the body. Becoming a member of VABC is the beginning of a life connected to the family of God and a commitment to serve. We *dream* of a day when

church members are able to recognize their unique giftedness for ministry, serving in the Church for the glory of God.

**Suggested Strategies:**

Vibrant Men's Ministry

Compassionate Women's Ministry

After School Ministries

Shut-In Bible Studies

Church/Community Activities (ex. joining local Bowling leagues, Cruise-Ins, Big Game Dinners.) All events should have the goal of building relationships with the unchurched.

Family Strengthening Ministry (ex. Life Skills Classes)

Exciting Youth Discipleship

Enlarge VBS to include Adult Classes

English as a second language classes with the goal of starting a Spanish service in old fellowship hall

APPENDIX 5

MINISTRY AREA PROFILE FOR VANN  
AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

# ministry area profile 2010

Illinois Baptist State Association  
2608 S Vann Ave  
Evansville, IN 47714

Study Area Definition:  
3.0 Mile Radius



ID# 224398:224398





Prepared For:  
 Illinois Baptist State Association  
 2608 S Vann Ave  
 Evansville, IN 47714

Study Area Definition:  
 3.0 Mile Radius

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Coordinates: 37:56.58 87:30.66  
Date: 1/13/2010

Prepared For:  
Illinois Baptist State Association  
2608 S Vann Ave  
Evansville, IN 47714

Study Area Definition:  
3.0 Mile Radius

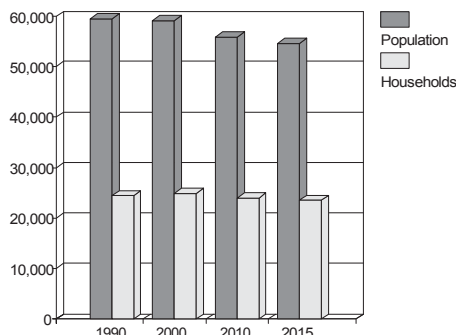
- 1 **Q** How many people live in the defined study area?  
**A** Currently, there are 55,883 persons residing in the defined study area. This represents a decrease of 3,647 or 6.1% since 1990. During the same period of time, the U.S. as a whole grew by 23.3%. (see page 4)
- 2 **Q** Is the population in this area projected to grow?  
**A** No, between 2010 and 2015, the population is projected to decrease by 2.2% or 1,255 persons. During the same period, the U.S. population is projected to grow by 5.1%. (see page 4)
- 3 **Q** How much lifestyle diversity is represented?  
**A** The lifestyle diversity in the area is *extremely high* with a considerable 34 of the 50 U.S. Lifestyles segments represented. The top individual segment is *Established Empty-Nesters* representing 14.1% of all households. (see pages 13 and 14)
- 4 **Q** How do racial or ethnic groups contribute to diversity in this area?  
**A** Based upon the total number of different groups present, the racial/ethnic diversity in the area is *very high*. Among individual groups, *Anglos* represent 76.8% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up just 23.2% which is well below the national average of 35%. The largest of these groups, *African-Americans*, accounts for 17.7% of the total population. *Native-Americans/Others* are projected to be the fastest growing group increasing by 13.6% between 2010 and 2015. (see pages 4 and 7)
- 5 **Q** What are the major generational groups represented?  
**A** The largest age group in terms of numbers is *Survivors* (age 29 to 49) comprised of 15,865 persons or 28.4% of the total population in the area. *Builders* (age 86 and up) make up 2.3% of the population which compared to a national average of 1.7% makes them the most over-represented group in the area. (see page 4)
- 6 **Q** Overall, how traditional are the family structures?  
**A** The area can be described as *very non-traditional* due to the below average presence of married persons and two-parent families. (see page 6)
- 7 **Q** How educated are the adults?  
**A** Based upon the number of years completed and college enrollment, the overall education level in the area is *somewhat low*. While 84.3% of the population aged 25 and over have graduated from high school as compared to the national average of 80.4%, college graduates account for 18.7% of those over 25 in the area versus 24.4% in the U.S. (see page 8)
- 8 **Q** Which household concerns are unusually high in the area?  
**A** Concerns which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Neighborhood Gangs, Affordable Housing, Adequate Food, Health Insurance, Neighborhood Crime and Safety* and *Retirement Opportunities*. (see page 16)
- 9 **Q** What is the likely faith receptivity?  
**A** Overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is *somewhat high* when compared to national averages. (see page 15)
- 10 **Q** What is the likely giving potential in the area?  
**A** Based upon the average household income of \$48,366 per year and the likely contribution behavior in the area, the overall religious giving potential can be described as *very low*. (see page 4 and 17)

Coordinates: 37:56.58 87:30.66  
Date: 1/13/2010

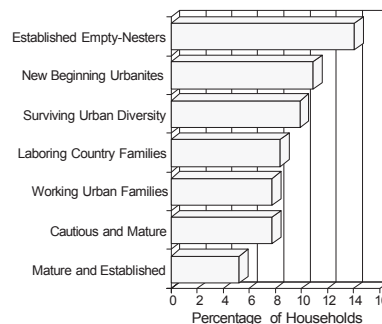
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Population and Households

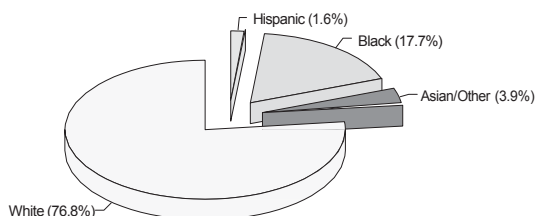


Primary U.S. Lifestyles Segments-2010

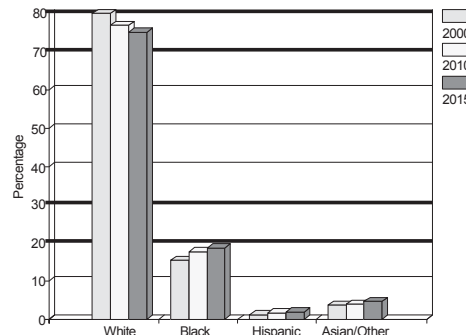


The population in the study area has decreased by 3244 persons, or 5.5% since 2000 and is projected to decrease by 1255 persons, or 2.2% between 2010 and 2015. The number of households has decreased by 974, or 3.9% since 2000 and is projected to decrease by 400, or 1.7% between 2010 and 2015.

Population By Race/Ethnicity-2010

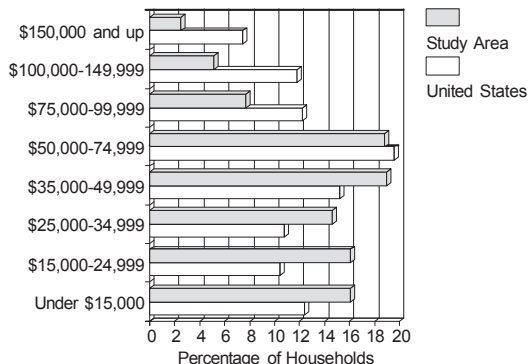


Population By Race/Ethnicity Trend

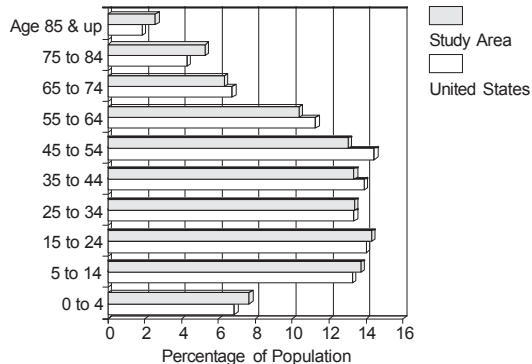


Between 2010 and 2015, the White population is projected to decrease by 1906 persons and to decrease from 76.8% to 75.1% of the total population. The Black population is projected to increase by 260 persons and to increase from 17.7% to 18.6% of the total. The Hispanic/Latino population is projected to increase by 106 persons and to increase from 1.6% to 1.8% of the total. The Asian/Other population is projected to increase by 284 persons and to increase from 3.9% to 4.5% of the total population.

Households By Income-2010



Population by Age-2010



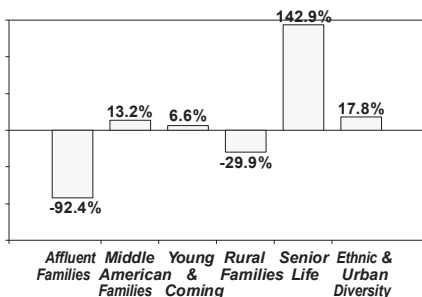
The average household income in the study area is \$48366 a year as compared to the U.S. average of \$69376. The average age in the study area is 37.4 and is projected to increase to 37.7 by 2015. The average age in the U.S. is 37.6 and is projected to increase to 38.4 by 2015.

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Date: 1/13/2010

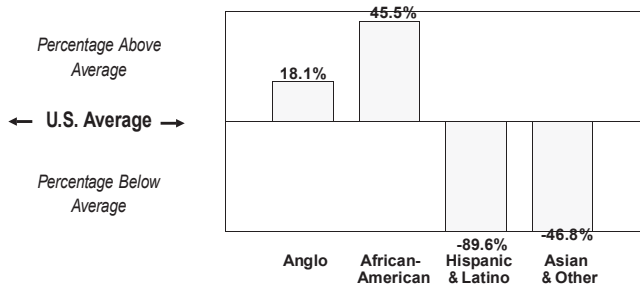
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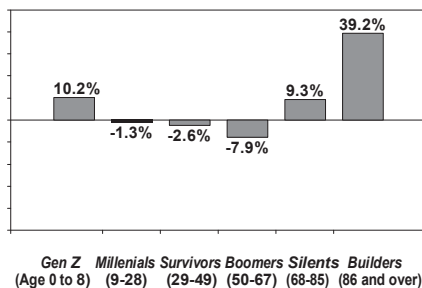
### U.S. Lifestyles Group



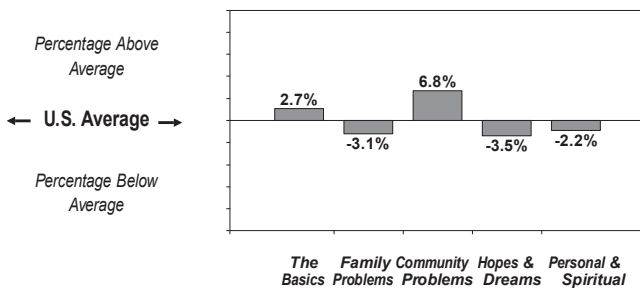
### Race/Ethnicity



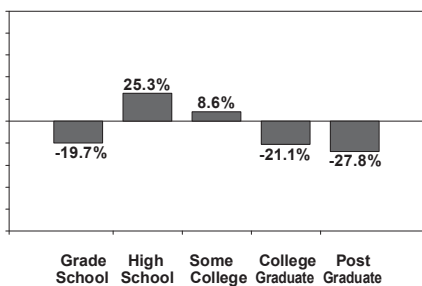
### Generations



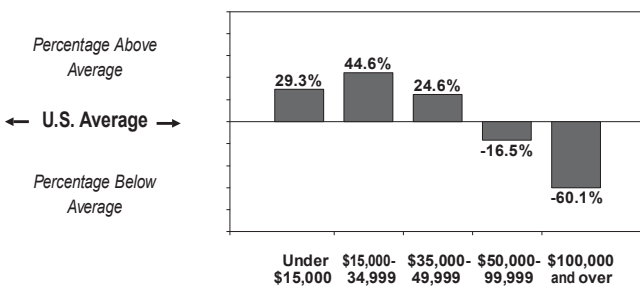
### Primary Concern Groups



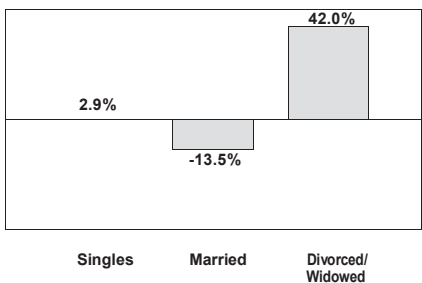
### Education Completed by Adults



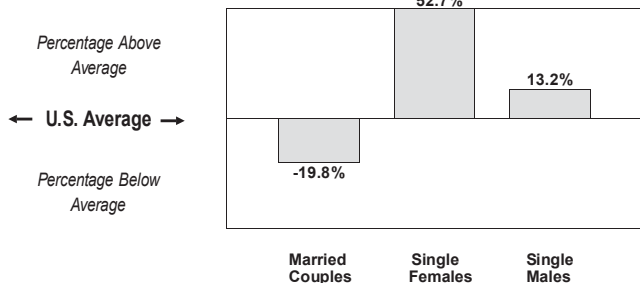
### Household Income



### Marital Status



### Households with Children



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POPULATION				
	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Update	2015 Projection
▲ Indicates a consistent upward trend ↓ Indicates a consistent downward trend				
↓ Population	59,530	59,127	55,883	54,628
Population Change		(403)	(3,244)	(1,255)
Percentage Change		-0.7%	-5.5%	-2.2%
Average Annual Growth Rate		-0.1%	-0.5%	-0.4%
↓ Density (Pop. per square mile)	2,105	2,091	1,976	1,932
HOUSEHOLDS				
Households	24,397	24,852	23,878	23,478
Household Change		455	(974)	(400)
Percentage Change		1.9%	-3.9%	-1.7%
Average Annual Growth Rate		0.2%	-0.4%	-0.3%
↓ Persons Per Household	2.34	2.28	2.24	2.23

POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY						
	2000 Census		2010 Update		2015 Projection	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
↓ White (Non-Hispanic)	47,298	80.0%	42,939	76.8%	41,033	75.1%
▲ African-American (Non-Hisp)	9,071	15.3%	9,879	17.7%	10,139	18.6%
▲ Hispanic/Latino	654	1.1%	898	1.6%	1,004	1.8%
▲ Asian/Other (Non-Hisp)	2,103	3.6%	2,168	3.9%	2,452	4.5%

POPULATION BY GENDER						
	2000 Census	2010 Update	2015 Projection			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
↓ Female	31,828	53.8%	29,806	53.3%	29,013	53.1%
▲ Male	27,299	46.2%	26,077	46.7%	25,615	46.9%

POPULATION BY GENERATION						
	2000 Census	2010 Update	2015 Projection			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
▲ Generation Z (Born 2002 and later)	0	0.0%	7,470	13.4%	11,196	20.5%
Millennials (Born 1982 to 2001)	15,131	25.6%	15,170	27.1%	14,461	26.5%
↓ Survivors (Born 1961 to 1981)	18,490	31.3%	15,864	28.4%	14,695	26.9%
↓ Boomers (Born 1943 to 1960)	13,066	22.1%	10,587	18.9%	9,439	17.3%
↓ Silents (Born 1925 to 1942)	8,053	13.6%	5,481	9.8%	4,371	8.0%
↓ Builders (Born 1924 and earlier)	4,386	7.4%	1,310	2.3%	466	0.9%

AGE			
	2000 Census	2010 Update	2015 Projection
▲ Average Age	37.3	37.4	37.7
▲ Median Age	35.6	36.7	37.2

INCOME			
	2000 Census	2010 Update	2015 Projection
▲ Average Household Income	\$43,887	\$48,366	\$51,329
▲ Median Household Income	\$35,136	\$39,318	\$41,415
▲ Per Capita Income	\$18,446	\$20,666	\$22,060

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HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME

▲ Indicates a consistent upward trend ↓ Indicates a consistent downward trend	2000 Census		2010 Update		2015 Projection	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
▲ \$150,000 or more	530	2.1%	608	2.5%	713	3.0%
▲ \$100,000 to \$149,999	853	3.4%	1,230	5.2%	1,443	6.1%
▲ \$75,000 to \$99,999	1,538	6.2%	1,844	7.7%	2,014	8.6%
▲ \$50,000 to \$74,999	4,265	17.2%	4,499	18.8%	4,632	19.7%
↓ \$35,000 to \$49,999	4,729	19.0%	4,529	19.0%	4,321	18.4%
↓ \$25,000 to \$34,999	3,927	15.8%	3,500	14.7%	3,306	14.1%
↓ \$15,000 to \$24,999	4,356	17.5%	3,828	16.0%	3,504	14.9%
↓ Under \$15,000	4,654	18.7%	3,839	16.1%	3,546	15.1%

POPULATION BY PHASE OF LIFE

▲ Before Formal Schooling (Age 0-4)	4,061	6.9%	4,290	7.7%	4,222	7.7%
▲ Required Formal Schooling (5-17)	9,890	16.7%	9,697	17.4%	9,762	17.9%
↓ College Years, Career Starts (18-24)	7,434	12.6%	5,959	10.7%	5,778	10.6%
↓ Singles and Young Families (25-34)	8,076	13.7%	7,480	13.4%	6,582	12.0%
↓ Families, Empty Nesters (35-54)	15,646	26.5%	14,732	26.4%	14,008	25.6%
▲ Enrichment Years Singles/Couples (55-64)	5,019	8.5%	5,791	10.4%	6,221	11.4%
Retirement Opportunities (65+)	9,001	15.2%	7,934	14.2%	8,055	14.7%

POPULATION BY AGE (DETAIL)

▲ Under 5 years	4,061	6.9%	4,290	7.7%	4,222	7.7%
▲ 5 to 9 years	4,022	6.8%	3,975	7.1%	3,981	7.3%
▲ 10 to 14 years	3,721	6.3%	3,701	6.6%	3,741	6.8%
15 to 17 years	2,147	3.6%	2,021	3.6%	2,040	3.7%
18 to 20 years	3,575	6.0%	2,885	5.2%	2,872	5.3%
↓ 21 to 24 years	3,859	6.5%	3,074	5.5%	2,906	5.3%
↓ 25 to 29 years	4,235	7.2%	3,367	6.0%	3,146	5.8%
30 to 34 years	3,841	6.5%	4,113	7.4%	3,436	6.3%
35 to 39 years	4,160	7.0%	3,950	7.1%	3,860	7.1%
40 to 44 years	4,273	7.2%	3,512	6.3%	3,442	6.3%
↓ 45 to 49 years	3,910	6.6%	3,616	6.5%	3,384	6.2%
50 to 54 years	3,303	5.6%	3,654	6.5%	3,322	6.1%
▲ 55 to 59 years	2,634	4.5%	3,199	5.7%	3,326	6.1%
▲ 60 to 64 years	2,385	4.0%	2,592	4.6%	2,895	5.3%
65 to 69 years	2,071	3.5%	1,904	3.4%	2,186	4.0%
70 to 74 years	2,195	3.7%	1,627	2.9%	1,720	3.1%
↓ 75 to 84 years	3,487	5.9%	2,947	5.3%	2,596	4.8%
▲ 85 or more years	1,248	2.1%	1,456	2.6%	1,553	2.8%

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2608 S Vann Ave  
Evansville, IN 47714

Study Area Definition:  
3.0 Mile Radius

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<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>				
<b>Marital Status All Persons 15 and Older</b>	47,323			
Single (Never Married)	13,187	27.9%	27.1%	103
Married	23,126	48.9%	56.5%	86
▲ Divorced/Widowed	<b>11,009</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Marital Status Females 15 and Older</b>	25,979			
Single (Never Married)	6,648	25.6%	24.1%	106
Married	11,577	44.6%	54.6%	82
▲ Divorced/Widowed	<b>7,754</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Marital Status Males 15 and Older</b>	21,344			
Single (Never Married)	6,539	30.6%	30.3%	101
Married	11,550	54.1%	58.6%	92
▲ Divorced/Widowed	<b>3,255</b>	<b>15.3%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>FAMILY STRUCTURE</b>				
<b>Households By Type</b>	24,852			
Single Male	2,979	12.0%	11.0%	109
▲ Single Female	<b>5,160</b>	<b>20.8%</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>140</b>
Married Couple	10,506	42.3%	52.5%	80
Other Family - Male Head of Household	862	3.5%	4.1%	85
▲ Other Family - Female Head of Household	<b>3,725</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>127</b>
Non Family - Male Head of Household	895	3.6%	3.4%	106
▲ Non Family - Female Head of Household	<b>725</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Households With Children 0 to 18</b>	7,807			
Married Couple Family	4,316	55.3%	68.9%	80
Other Family - Male Head of Household	598	7.7%	6.8%	113
▲ Other Family - Female Head of Household	<b>2,768</b>	<b>35.5%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>153</b>
▲ Non Family	<b>125</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Population By Household Type</b>	59,095			
Family Households	44,727	75.7%	82.2%	92
▲ Non Family Households	<b>11,910</b>	<b>20.2%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>134</b>
▲ Group Quarters	<b>2,458</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>150</b>

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<b>GROUP QUARTERS</b>				
<b>Population In Group Quarters By Type</b>	2,458			
↓ Institutions	706	28.7%	52.2%	55
▲ College Dorm	<b>1,535</b>	<b>62.4%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>235</b>
↓ Military	0	0.0%	4.6%	0
Shelter/Street (category eliminated in 2000)	0	0.0%	0.0%	100
↓ Other	216	8.8%	16.7%	53
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>				
<b>Population By Race/Ethnicity</b>	59,127			
White (Non-Hispanic)	47,298	80.0%	69.1%	116
▲ African-American (Non-Hisp)	<b>9,071</b>	<b>15.3%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	<b>128</b>
↓ Hispanic/Latino	653	1.1%	12.5%	9
↓ Native American (Non-Hisp)	141	0.2%	0.7%	32
↓ Asian (Non-Hisp)	420	0.7%	3.6%	20
↓ Hawaiian & Pacific Islander (Non-Hisp)	0	0.0%	0.1%	0
▲ Other Races & Multiple Races (Non-Hisp)	<b>1,404</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Asian Population By Race</b>	420			
↓ Chinese	51	12.1%	22.6%	54
▲ Japanese	<b>55</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>168</b>
▲ Indian	<b>83</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>121</b>
▲ Korean	<b>61</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>138</b>
▲ Vietnamese	<b>60</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>130</b>
Other Asian Races	110	26.2%	31.8%	82
<b>Hispanic/Latino Population By Race</b>	653			
▲ White	<b>396</b>	<b>60.6%</b>	<b>47.8%</b>	<b>127</b>
↓ African-American	7	1.1%	1.9%	58
↓ Native American	0	0.0%	1.0%	0
↓ Asian	0	0.0%	0.3%	0
↓ Other Races & Multiple Races	250	38.3%	49.0%	78
<b>Hispanic/Latino Population By Origin</b>	653			
Mexican	384	58.8%	58.6%	100
▲ Puerto Rican	<b>82</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>130</b>
▲ Cuban	<b>34</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>148</b>
Other Hispanic Origin	199	30.5%	28.4%	107



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<b>EDUCATION</b>				
<b>Population By School Enrollment (Age 3 and over)</b>	56,543			
Pre-Primary (Public)	1,317	2.3%	2.3%	101
Pre-Primary (Private)	693	1.2%	1.1%	114
↓ Elementary/High School (Public)	7,509	13.3%	16.6%	80
▲ Elementary/High School (Private)	<b>1,356</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>125</b>
▲ Enrolled in College	<b>4,723</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>129</b>
Not Enrolled in School	40,944	72.4%	71.6%	101
<b>Population By Education Completed (Age 25 and over)</b>	37,742			
↓ Elementary (Less than 9 years)	1,735	4.6%	7.5%	61
Some High School (9 to 11 years)	4,206	11.1%	12.1%	92
▲ High School Graduate (12 years)	<b>13,542</b>	<b>35.9%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>125</b>
Some College (13 to 15 years)	8,621	22.8%	21.0%	109
Associate Degree	2,598	6.9%	6.3%	109
↓ Bachelor's Degree	4,627	12.3%	15.5%	79
↓ Graduate Degree	2,414	6.4%	8.9%	72
<b>OCCUPATION</b>				
<b>Population By Occupation Type (Age 15 and over)</b>	28,745			
TOTAL WHITE COLLAR	16,092	56.0%	60.3%	93
↓ Executive and Managerial	2,680	9.3%	13.5%	69
Professional Specialty	2,497	8.7%	10.7%	81
Technical Support	2,307	8.0%	9.5%	85
Sales	3,751	13.0%	11.2%	116
Administrative Support & Clerical	4,857	16.9%	15.4%	109
TOTAL BLUE COLLAR	12,653	44.0%	39.7%	111
▲ Service: Private Households	<b>970</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>121</b>
Service: Protective	531	1.8%	2.0%	94
▲ Service: Other	<b>2,627</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>134</b>
↓ Farming, Forestry & Fishing	20	0.1%	0.7%	9
Precision Production and Craft	4,211	14.6%	12.4%	118
↓ Operators and Assemblers	1,197	4.2%	5.5%	76
Transportation and Material Moving	1,987	6.9%	6.1%	113
Laborers	1,110	3.9%	3.3%	118

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	Number	Percent		
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>				
<b>Population By Employment Status (Age 15 and over)</b>	46,549			
Employed	28,785	61.8%	60.3%	103
<b>▲ Unemployed</b>	<b>2,139</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>126</b>
Not in Labor Force	15,626	33.6%	36.1%	93
<b>Households With Families By Number of Workers</b>	15,093			
No Workers	2,145	14.2%	12.7%	112
1 Worker	4,738	31.4%	30.4%	103
2 Workers	6,591	43.7%	45.0%	97
3 or more Workers	1,619	10.7%	11.9%	90
<b>Total Female Population By Work Status (Age 16 and over)</b>	25,539			
TOTAL WORKING	14,530	56.9%	54.2%	105
With No Children	9,582	37.5%	33.8%	111
With Children Age 0 to 5 only	1,162	4.5%	4.4%	103
With Children Age 6 to 17 only	2,848	11.2%	12.4%	90
With Children Both Age 0 to 5 and 6 to 17	938	3.7%	3.6%	103
TOTAL NOT WORKING (UNEMPLOYED)	974	3.8%	3.3%	114
<b>▲ With No Children</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>128</b>
↓ With Children Age 0 to 5 only	70	0.3%	0.3%	79
With Children Age 6 to 17 only	144	0.6%	0.6%	101
↓ With Children Both Age 0 to 5 and 6 to 17	49	0.2%	0.3%	73
TOTAL NOT IN THE LABOR FORCE	10,036	39.3%	42.5%	93
With No Children	8,434	33.0%	32.9%	101
↓ With Children Age 0 to 5 only	559	2.2%	2.7%	80
↓ With Children Age 6 to 17 only	635	2.5%	4.3%	58
↓ With Children Both Age 0 to 5 and 6 to 17	408	1.6%	2.5%	63
<b>POVERTY AND RETIREMENT INCOME</b>				
<b>Households By Poverty Status (\$17,603 for family of 4 in '00)</b>	24,852			
Above Poverty Line (Householder Age 0 to 64)	16,207	65.2%	69.5%	94
Above Poverty Line (Householder Age 65 and over)	5,505	22.2%	18.7%	118
Below Poverty Line (Householder Age 0 to 64)	2,605	10.5%	9.4%	112
Below Poverty Line (Householder Age 65 and over)	535	2.2%	2.4%	90
<b>Households By Presence of Retirement Income</b>	24,852			
With Retirement Income	4,416	17.8%	16.7%	106
Without Retirement Income	20,437	82.2%	83.3%	99

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<b>HOUSING</b>				
<b>Occupied Units By Type</b>	24,808			
Owner Occupied	15,632	63.0%	66.2%	95
Renter Occupied	9,175	37.0%	33.8%	109
↓ Median Rent	\$499		\$657	76
<b>Vacant Units By Type</b>	2,272			
▲ For Rent	980	43.1%	25.7%	168
▲ For Sale	438	19.3%	13.7%	141
↓ Seasonal	242	10.7%	37.1%	29
Other	612	26.9%	23.5%	114
<b>Structures By Number of Units</b>	27,080			
Single Unit	18,743	69.2%	65.8%	105
▲ 2 to 9 Units	4,818	17.8%	13.7%	130
10 to 19 Units	1,188	4.4%	4.0%	110
20 to 49 Units	812	3.0%	3.3%	90
↓ 50 or more Units	1,108	4.1%	5.3%	77
↓ Mobile Home	407	1.5%	7.6%	20
↓ Other	4	0.0%	0.2%	7
Single To Multiple Unit Ratio	2.36		2.50	95
<b>2000 Owner-Occupied Property Values</b>	14,270			
Under \$25,000	314	2.2%	2.4%	93
▲ \$25,000 to \$49,999	2,329	16.3%	7.5%	217
▲ \$50,000 to \$74,999	5,882	41.2%	16.3%	253
▲ \$75,000 to \$99,999	2,843	19.9%	14.1%	142
↓ \$100,000 to 149,999	1,878	13.2%	23.7%	55
↓ \$150,000 to \$199,999	583	4.1%	14.6%	28
↓ \$200,000 to \$299,999	294	2.1%	11.9%	17
↓ \$300,000 to \$399,999	51	0.4%	4.4%	8
↓ \$400,000 to \$499,999	50	0.4%	2.1%	17
↓ \$500,000 and over	47	0.3%	2.9%	11
↓ 2000 Median Property Value	\$84,666		\$158,934	53

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<b>HOUSING (CONTINUED)</b>				
<b>Housing Units By Year Built</b>	27,080			
↓ 1995 to 2000	1,197	4.4%	9.7%	46
↓ 1990 to 1994	854	3.2%	7.3%	43
↓ 1980 to 1989	2,052	7.6%	15.8%	48
↓ 1970 to 1979	3,587	13.2%	18.5%	72
1960 to 1969	3,183	11.8%	13.7%	86
▲ 1950 to 1959	<b>5,936</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>173</b>
▲ 1940 to 1949	<b>4,908</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>249</b>
▲ 1939 or earlier	<b>5,363</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Households By Number of Persons</b>	24,852			
▲ 1 Person Household	<b>8,139</b>	<b>32.7%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	<b>127</b>
2 Person Household	8,269	33.3%	32.5%	102
3 Person Household	4,080	16.4%	16.5%	100
↓ 4 Person Household	2,666	10.7%	14.3%	75
↓ 5 Person Household	1,169	4.7%	6.7%	70
↓ 6 Person Household	347	1.4%	2.7%	52
↓ 7 or more Person Household	183	0.7%	1.7%	44
Average Persons Per Household	2.3		2.6	88
<b>Population By Urban/Rural</b>	59,127			
▲ Urban	<b>58,783</b>	<b>99.4%</b>	<b>79.0%</b>	<b>126</b>
↓ Rural	344	0.6%	21.0%	3
<b>Households By Heating Type</b>	24,808			
▲ Utility Gas	<b>18,244</b>	<b>73.5%</b>	<b>51.2%</b>	<b>144</b>
↓ Other Gas	130	0.5%	6.5%	8
Electric	6,335	25.5%	30.3%	84
↓ Oil	11	0.0%	9.0%	0
↓ Coal	0	0.0%	0.1%	0
↓ Wood	18	0.1%	1.7%	4
↓ Solar/Other Fuel	51	0.2%	0.4%	47
↓ No Fuel Used	19	0.1%	0.7%	11
<b>Households By Presence of Telephone</b>	24,808			
With Telephone	24,054	97.0%	97.6%	99
▲ Without Telephone	<b>753</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>125</b>

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<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
<b>Households By Number of Vehicles</b>	24,808			
No Vehicles	2,940	11.9%	10.3%	115
1 Vehicle	10,086	40.7%	34.2%	119
2 Vehicle	8,485	34.2%	38.4%	89
↓ 3 or more Vehicles	3,296	13.3%	17.1%	78
<b>Workers By Travel Time to Work</b>	27,674			
↓ Work At Home	568	2.1%	3.4%	61
▲ Less than 10 minutes	4,967	17.9%	14.4%	125
▲ 10 to 29 minutes	18,966	68.5%	51.1%	134
↓ 30 to 59 minutes	2,722	9.8%	26.5%	37
↓ 60 to 89 minutes	591	2.1%	5.2%	41
↓ 90 or more minutes	428	1.5%	2.8%	56
↓ Average Travel Time to Work (minutes)	18.3		25.5	72
<b>Workers By Type of Transportation to Work</b>	28,242			
Drive Alone	23,044	81.6%	75.7%	108
Car Pool	2,938	10.4%	12.2%	85
↓ Public Transportation	559	2.0%	4.7%	42
↓ Motorcycle	55	0.2%	0.5%	40
Walk to Work	930	3.3%	2.9%	112
↓ Other Means	147	0.5%	0.7%	74
↓ Work at Home	568	2.0%	3.3%	62

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SEGMENT GROUPS					
No.	Group Name <small>Please see accompanying guide for a complete description of each segment Groups are sorted by number of households in study area</small>	Study Area		U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
		Households	Percent.		
2	<b>Middle American Families</b> (9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 23, 25 and 28)	8,496	35.6%	31.4%	113
6	<b>Ethnic And Urban Diversity</b> (24, 32, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 48)	5,171	21.7%	18.4%	118
5	<b>Senior Life</b> (7, 20, 21, 22, 30 and 31)	4,004	16.8%	6.9%	243
3	<b>Young And Coming</b> (8, 12, 13, 15, 19, 34, 37, 39 and 47)	3,729	15.6%	14.7%	107
4	<b>Rural Families</b> (27, 26, 29, 33, 35 and 38)	2,187	9.2%	13.1%	70
1	<b>Affluent Families</b> (segments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 14)	273	1.1%	15.1%	8

INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS					
No.	Segment Name <small>Segments are sorted by number of households in the study area.</small>	Study Area		U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
		Households	Percent.		
23	Established Empty-Nesters	3,363	14.1%	3.4%	416
39	New Beginning Urbanites	2,613	10.9%	2.8%	396
40	Surviving Urban Diversity	2,365	9.9%	4.0%	245
35	Laboring Country Families	2,006	8.4%	2.7%	306
18	Working Urban Families	1,855	7.8%	4.0%	196
20	Cautious and Mature	1,851	7.8%	2.6%	294
22	Mature and Established	1,247	5.2%	1.8%	292
10	Suburban Mid-Life Families	1,237	5.2%	5.5%	93
46	Struggling Black Households	1,058	4.4%	2.5%	176
25	Working Country Consumers	1,005	4.2%	4.1%	102
24	Metro Multi-Ethnic Diversity	650	2.7%	2.7%	99
8	Rising Potential Professionals	570	2.4%	2.3%	102
28	Building Country Families	540	2.3%	2.8%	81
11	Young Suburban Families	491	2.1%	3.0%	69
43	Laboring Urban Diversity	418	1.8%	0.5%	345
30	Urban Senior Life	386	1.6%	0.8%	195
45	Struggling Urban Diversity	365	1.5%	2.5%	62
21	Mature and Stable	273	1.1%	0.6%	202
42	Laboring Rural Diversity	219	0.9%	1.5%	60
7	Prosperous and Mature	215	0.9%	0.5%	167

Coordinates: 37:56.58 87:30.66  
Date: 1/13/2010

Prepared For:  
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2608 S Vann Ave  
Evansville, IN 47714

Study Area Definition:  
3.0 Mile Radius

No.	Individual Segment Name <small>Segments are sorted by number of households in the study area.</small>	Study Area		U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
		Households	Percent.		
19	Educated and Promising	184	0.8%	0.1%	982
3	Mid-Life Prosperity	143	0.6%	1.5%	39
47	University Life	137	0.6%	0.8%	76
15	Reliable Young Starters	127	0.5%	4.3%	13
29	Working Country Families	123	0.5%	1.0%	54
12	Educated New Starters	98	0.4%	2.9%	14
4	Educated Mid-Life Families	79	0.3%	3.4%	10
44	Laboring Urban Life	53	0.2%	0.1%	296
32	Working Urban Life	43	0.2%	1.7%	11
14	Secure Mid-Life Families	34	0.1%	0.7%	22
31	Mature Country Families	32	0.1%	0.5%	25
49	Exception Households	27	0.1%	0.2%	45
27	Country Family Diversity	25	0.1%	0.3%	31
26	Working Suburban Families	23	0.1%	0.1%	81
38	Rural Working Families	10	0.0%	8.8%	0
5	Prosperous Diversity	9	0.0%	3.1%	1
6	Prosperous New Country Families	6	0.0%	2.1%	1
9	Educated Working Families	4	0.0%	0.1%	20
1	Traditional Affluent Families	2	0.0%	3.5%	0
16	Established Country Families	1	0.0%	6.4%	0
17	Large Young Families	0	0.0%	2.2%	0
41	Struggling Hispanic Households	0	0.0%	1.6%	0
48	Struggling Urban Life	0	0.0%	0.8%	0
2	Professional Affluent Families	0	0.0%	0.8%	0
34	College and Career Starters	0	0.0%	0.6%	0
37	Rising Multi-Ethnic Urbanites	0	0.0%	0.6%	0
36	Working Diverse Urbanites	0	0.0%	0.4%	0
13	Affluent Educated Urbanites	0	0.0%	0.4%	0
50	Unclassified Households	0	0.0%	0.2%	0
33	Laboring Rural Families	0	0.0%	0.1%	0
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>23,887</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100</b>

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<b>FAITH INVOLVEMENT INDICATOR</b>			

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Be:**

Strongly Involved with Their Faith	34.3%	35.4%	97
Somewhat Involved with Their Faith	32.5%	29.9%	109
Not Involved with Their Faith	33.1%	34.7%	95

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Have:**

Increased Their Involvement with Their Faith in the Last 10 Years	22.0%	22.1%	100
Decreased Their Involvement with Their Faith in the Last 10 Years	23.5%	23.7%	99

**RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE INDICATOR**

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer:**

↓ Adventist	0.3%	0.5%	55
↓ Baptist	9.8%	16.1%	61
▲ <b>Catholic</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>124</b>
Congregational	1.8%	2.0%	90
↓ Eastern Religions (Buddhist/Hindu/Shinto/Islam)	0.3%	0.4%	57
↓ Episcopal	1.6%	2.9%	54
↓ Holiness	0.4%	0.8%	47
Jehovah's Witnesses	1.1%	1.1%	102
↓ Judaism	1.1%	3.2%	36
▲ <b>Lutheran</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>202</b>
▲ <b>Methodist</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>111</b>
↓ Mormon	0.2%	1.8%	11
↓ New Age	0.4%	0.6%	75
Non-Denominational / Independent	6.7%	6.9%	96
▲ <b>Orthodox</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>143</b>
↓ Pentecostal	1.9%	2.4%	78
↓ Presbyterian / Reformed	4.0%	4.6%	87
Unitarian / Universalist	0.7%	0.7%	103
Interested but No Preference	3.8%	3.9%	98
Not Interested and No Preference	10.5%	11.1%	94
Likely to Have Changed Their Preference in the Last 10 Years	15.4%	16.8%	91

**LEADERSHIP PREFERENCE INDICATOR**

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer A Leader Who:**

Tells them what to do	3.7%	4.0%	93
Lets them do what they want and is supportive	12.5%	11.7%	107
Lets them do what they want and stays out of the way	4.7%	4.8%	98
Works with them on deciding what to do and helps them do it	79.1%	79.6%	99



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<b>PRIMARY CONCERN INDICATOR</b>			
<b>Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Be Primarily Concerned With:</b>			
<b>THE BASICS:</b>			
Maintaining Personal Health	42.6%	43.5%	98
▲ Finding/Providing Health Insurance	<b>32.3%</b>	<b>29.0%</b>	<b>112</b>
Day-to-Day Financial Worries	32.0%	31.6%	101
↓ Finding Employment Opportunities	12.7%	14.4%	88
▲ Finding Affordable Housing	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>115</b>
▲ Providing Adequate Food	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>113</b>
Finding Child Care	6.3%	6.3%	100
<b>FAMILY PROBLEMS:</b>			
Dealing With Alcohol/Drug Abuse	17.4%	16.7%	104
Dealing With Teen / Child Problems	19.1%	20.7%	92
↓ Finding/Providing Aging Parent Care	13.9%	15.5%	89
Dealing With Abusive Relationships	12.0%	11.4%	106
Dealing With Divorce	4.3%	4.5%	97
<b>COMMUNITY PROBLEMS:</b>			
▲ Neighborhood Crime and Safety	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	<b>111</b>
Finding/Providing Good Schools	22.5%	23.5%	96
Dealing with Problems in Schools	13.0%	13.6%	96
Dealing With Racial / Ethnic Prejudice	12.9%	13.1%	99
▲ Dealing With Neighborhood Gangs	<b>15.2%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>179</b>
Dealing with Social Injustice	10.2%	11.3%	90
<b>HOPES AND DREAMS:</b>			
Achieving Long-term Financial Security	48.8%	50.6%	96
Finding Time for Recreation / Leisure	24.6%	25.3%	97
Finding Better Quality Healthcare	25.4%	23.9%	106
Finding A Satisfying Job / Career	19.0%	19.3%	98
Finding Retirement Opportunities	20.4%	18.9%	108
↓ Achieving A Fulfilling Marriage	18.9%	22.3%	85
Developing Parenting Skills	13.7%	14.7%	93
↓ Achieving Educational Objectives	5.5%	7.5%	74
<b>SPIRITUAL / PERSONAL:</b>			
Dealing With Stress	29.7%	29.8%	100
Finding Companionship	16.8%	17.3%	98
Finding A Good Church	15.6%	15.2%	103
Finding Spiritual Teaching	12.3%	12.9%	95
Finding Life Direction	12.7%	14.0%	91

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KEY VALUES INDICATOR

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Agree With the Following Statements:**

**GOD:**

"I believe there is a God"	85.6%	84.5%	101
"God is actively involved in the world including nations and their governments"	66.0%	63.8%	103

**SOCIETY:**

"It is important to preserve the traditional American family structure"	91.7%	91.5%	100
"A healthy environment has become a national crisis"	82.9%	82.8%	100
"Public education is essential to the future of American society"	93.7%	94.0%	100

**INSTITUTIONAL ROLES:**

"Government should be the primary provider of human welfare services"	51.5%	50.1%	103
"The role of Churches / Synagogues is to help form and support moral values"	81.5%	81.1%	100
"Churches and religious organizations should provide more human services"	63.7%	62.6%	102

**RACIAL / ETHNIC CHANGE:**

"The United States must open its doors to all people groups"	36.0%	36.3%	99
"The changing racial / ethnic face of America is a threat to our national heritage"	37.3%	36.3%	103

HOUSEHOLD CONTRIBUTION INDICATOR

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Contribute:**

**TO CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS:**

More than \$100 per year	58.9%	59.8%	98
More than \$500 per year	31.1%	31.2%	100
More than \$1,000 per year	16.5%	17.4%	95

**TO CHARITIES:**

More than \$100 per year	30.4%	33.7%	90
↓ More than \$500 per year	5.1%	6.8%	75
↓ More than \$1,000 per year	1.6%	2.3%	70

**TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:**

↓ More than \$100 per year	13.9%	16.1%	86
↓ More than \$500 per year	3.8%	4.3%	88
↓ More than \$1,000 per year	1.8%	2.2%	82

*Ministry Area Profile 2010*  
**Compass**  
REPORT

Illinois Baptist State Association  
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ID# 224398:224398

Ministry Area Profile 2010  
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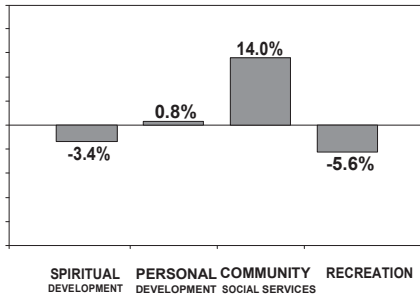


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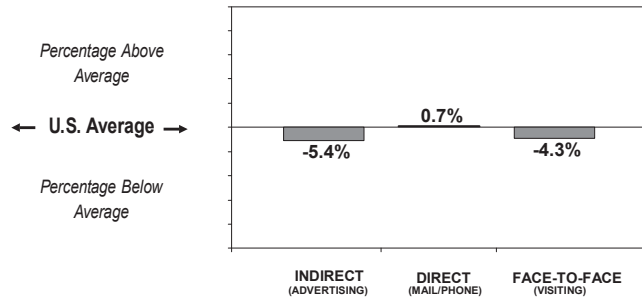
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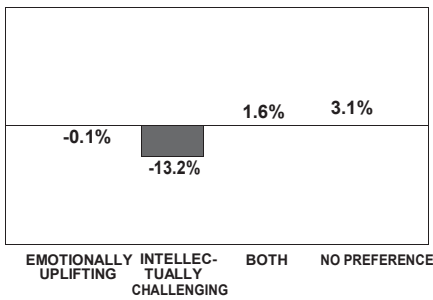
**Church Program Preferences**



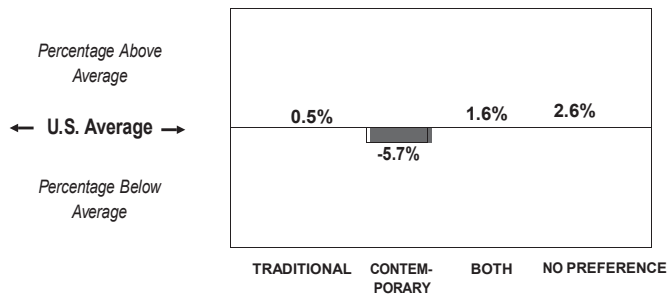
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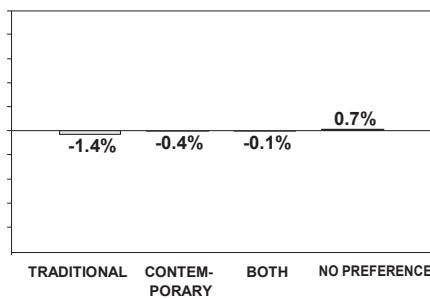
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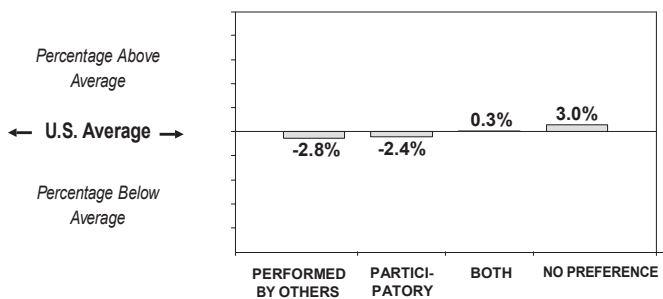
**Worship Style (2)**



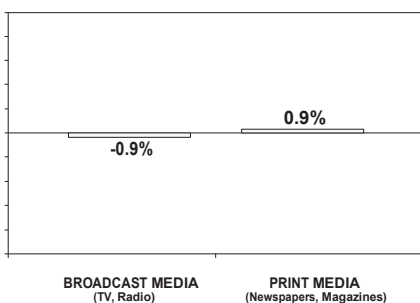
**Music Style (1)**



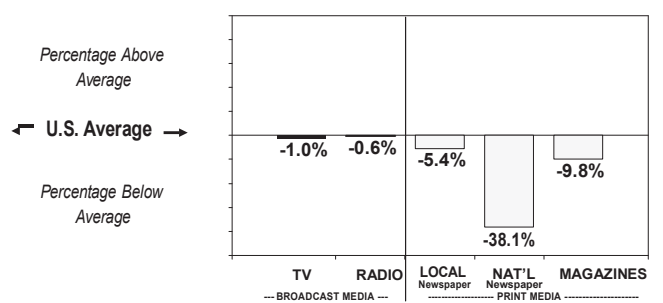
**Music Style (2)**



**Primary Media Summary**



**Primary Media Preferences**





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### CHURCH PROGRAM PREFERENCE INDICATOR

#### Estimated 2010 Households If Looking for a New Church Likely to Express as Most Important:

<b>SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:</b>			
Bible Study Discussion and Prayer Groups	39.3%	41.1%	96
Adult Theological Discussion Groups	21.8%	22.5%	97
Spiritual Retreats	11.5%	11.6%	99
<b>PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:</b>			
Marriage Enrichment Opportunities	13.7%	15.2%	90
Parent Training Programs	8.5%	7.8%	108
▲ <b>Twelve Step Programs</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>122</b>
▲ <b>Divorce Recovery</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>COMMUNITY/SOCIAL SERVICES:</b>			
Personal or Family Counseling	24.4%	22.5%	108
Care for the Terminally Ill	16.2%	15.7%	103
▲ <b>Food and Clothing Resources</b>	<b>15.3%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>138</b>
▲ <b>Day Care Services</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>114</b>
▲ <b>Church Sponsored Day-School</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>RECREATION:</b>			
Youth Social Programs	27.0%	29.7%	91
Family Activities and Outings	29.4%	32.8%	90
Active Retirement Programs	29.0%	26.8%	108
↓ Cultural Programs (Music, Drama, Art)	16.2%	18.9%	85
Sports or Camping	6.7%	6.3%	106

SUMMARY	
Spiritual Development Index	97
Personal Development Index	101
▲ <b>Community/Social Services Index</b>	<b>114</b>
Recreation Index	94



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### WORSHIP STYLE INDICATOR

#### Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Worship which is:

##### PART 1:

A. Emotionally Uplifting	26.3%	26.4%	100
↓ B. Intellectually Challenging	9.6%	11.1%	87
C. Both A and B	39.8%	39.2%	102
D. No Preference or Not Interested	24.1%	23.4%	103

##### PART 2:

A. Traditional/Formal/Ceremonial	20.3%	20.2%	100
B. Contemporary/Informal	24.8%	26.3%	94
C. Both A and B	27.0%	26.5%	102
D. No Preference or Not Interested	27.6%	26.9%	103

### MUSIC STYLE INDICATOR

#### Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Music which is:

##### PART 1:

A. Traditional	24.1%	24.4%	99
B. Contemporary	19.7%	19.7%	100
C. Both A and B	31.1%	31.1%	100
D. No Preference or Not Interested	25.0%	24.8%	101

##### PART 2:

A. Performed by Others	18.2%	18.7%	97
B. Participatory	22.4%	22.9%	98
C. Both A and B	32.3%	32.2%	100
D. No Preference or Not Interested	27.0%	26.2%	103



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### MISSION EMPHASIS INDICATOR

#### Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Involvement and Mission Emphasis Focused On:

**PART 1:**

A. Community	21.2%	22.0%	96
B. Personal Spiritual Development	13.9%	14.3%	97
C. Both A and B	37.1%	37.4%	99
D. No Preference or Not Interested	27.6%	26.3%	105

**PART 2:**

↓ A. Global Mission	5.3%	6.2%	86
B. Local Mission	34.0%	33.3%	102
C. Both A and B	29.5%	30.1%	98
D. No Preference or Not Interested	30.7%	30.4%	101

### CHURCH ARCHITECTURE INDICATOR

#### Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Architecture which is:

**PART 1:**

A. Traditional	26.9%	26.6%	101
B. Contemporary	15.3%	15.9%	96
C. Both A and B	32.1%	32.3%	99
D. No Preference or Not Interested	25.5%	25.1%	102

**PART 2:**

A. Somber/Serious	9.6%	9.4%	103
B. Light and Airy	34.4%	34.7%	99
C. Both A and B	26.5%	27.7%	96
D. No Preference or Not Interested	29.2%	28.2%	103





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### PRIMARY MEDIA PREFERENCE

#### Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Describe Their Primary Media Information Source As:

##### **BROADCAST MEDIA:**

Television	46.8%	47.3%	99
Radio	13.3%	13.3%	99

##### **PRINT MEDIA:**

Local Newspaper	38.8%	36.1%	107
↓ National Newspaper	2.7%	4.3%	62
↓ Magazines	1.8%	2.4%	73

### SECONDARY MEDIA PREFERENCE

#### Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Describe Their Secondary Media Information Source As:

##### **BROADCAST MEDIA:**

Television	33.6%	31.9%	105
Radio	24.3%	23.8%	102

##### **PRINT MEDIA:**

Local Newspaper	30.9%	32.7%	95
National Newspaper	5.6%	5.8%	98
Magazines	6.4%	7.0%	90

### SUMMARY

Overall Broadcast Media Index (100 = Average)	101
Overall Print Media Index	97



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**CHURCH CONTACT METHODS RATED GOOD**

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Rate As Good the Following Methods of Contact from a Church:**

<b>INDIRECT METHODS (LEAST PERSONAL):</b>			
Local Radio Announcements or Advertisements	33.1%	36.2%	91
Putting Ad in Local Newspaper	33.3%	33.8%	98
Local Cable Channels	28.6%	30.4%	94
<b>DIRECT METHODS (MORE PERSONAL):</b>			
Sending Information By Mail	53.0%	53.7%	99
Calling and Offering to Send Information By Mail	31.2%	29.5%	106
Calling and Discussing on the Phone	11.6%	12.0%	97
<b>FACE-TO-FACE METHODS (VERY PERSONAL):</b>			
Calling and Offering to Visit When Convenient	19.6%	20.1%	97
Going Door to Door	13.0%	14.0%	93

**CHURCH CONTACT METHODS RATED POOR**

**Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Rate As Poor the Following Methods of Contact from a Church:**

<b>INDIRECT METHODS (LEAST PERSONAL):</b>			
Local Radio Announcements or Advertisements	19.8%	19.6%	101
Putting Ad in Local Newspaper	20.3%	21.5%	94
Local Cable Channels	32.9%	30.7%	107
<b>DIRECT METHODS (MORE PERSONAL):</b>			
Sending Information By Mail	13.8%	13.3%	103
Calling and Offering to Send Information By Mail	32.0%	34.0%	94
Calling and Discussing on the Phone	61.6%	60.6%	102
<b>FACE-TO-FACE METHODS (VERY PERSONAL):</b>			
Calling and Offering to Visit When Convenient	49.2%	49.6%	99
Going Door to Door	63.9%	64.0%	100

SUMMARY OF METHODS RATED GOOD	
Indirect Methods Index (100 = Average)	95
Direct Methods Index	101
Face-to-Face Methods Index	96

SUMMARY OF METHODS RATED POOR	
Indirect Methods Index	101
Direct Methods Index	99
Face-to-Face Methods Index	100

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING AND CASTING A GREAT COMMISSION VISION AT VANN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH, EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

Eric David Martin, D.Min.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Travis S. Kerns

Chapter 1 describes the ministry context of Vann Avenue Baptist Church in Evansville, Indiana. This description includes a history of the church and its present situation. Also included in chapter 1 is a detailed demographic analysis of the community of southeast Evansville, Indiana. Contained in this chapter are the ministry goals for the ministry project, which come from the rationale for undertaking this attempt at developing and casting a great commission vision.

Chapter 2 examines the biblical and theological basis for this project. A biblical perspective in the visioning process is vital in discovering a God-sized vision. The basis of this project is to build from a close examination of Proverbs 29:18, Psalm 33:11, Genesis 12:1, Nehemiah 1-2:10, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Philippians 3:13-14 and Ephesians 4:1-16.8

Chapter 3 presents theoretical and practical issues regarding this project. This chapter examines studies completed on churches who have successfully led in great commission vision casting. This chapter also examines the importance of achieving buy-in when casting a great commission vision.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the entire process of this project. Including both an outline of the fifteen-week process and the methodology used during the project in order to provide opportunity for someone to be able to use it to duplicate the project in a different setting.

Chapter 5 provides a complete and thorough evaluation of the project. The question of whether the goals were met or not are addressed and evaluated. The evaluation also provides strengths and weaknesses of the project.

## VITA

Eric David Martin

### EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Bowling Green High School, Bowling Green, Kentucky

B.A., Western Kentucky University, 2002

M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007

### MINISTERIAL

University Outreach Director, Glendale Baptist Church, Bowling Green,  
Kentucky, 2000-2004

Pastor, Huntsville Missionary Baptist Church, Morgantown, Kentucky, 2004-  
2008

Pastor, Vann Avenue Baptist Church, Evansville, Indiana, 2009-