

Ask God for a Vision
Presented by Mary Lowman
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Day One

I'd like you to imagine this scene. It's time for your annual evaluation by your boss, and you're confident it will be a good result because you've met all the requirements of your job description. In addition, you've only had two sick days, and you're almost always on time. You're expecting a good evaluation and hopefully a good raise.

Your boss agrees you've done an adequate job and met all the minimum requirements, and after that brief comment, he asks if you have any questions. You're puzzled; is that all he's going to say? You expected some credit for meeting the requirements. You ask if you are going to get a raise.

Your boss then explains that raises are given for people who do more than the job description requires, and since you've only met the requirements, you are not qualified for a raise. Would you be shocked at that evaluation? Well, basically that's what Jesus was teaching his disciples in this parable in Luke 17:

Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So, you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' (Luke 17:7-10).

Does that seem harsh to you? Jesus was trying to teach his disciples that just getting by, doing what you're supposed to do is not enough for commendation. He wants his disciples to have a passion for doing more than their mere duty. He wants his disciples to have a vision for all they could do and be because of Jesus.

The Bible says without a vision, people perish. I'm not talking about some miraculous sign you receive, or an out-of-body experience or a dream. No, the vision I'm talking about is being able to see what God wants to do in and through you. And without this kind of vision, you perish, you fail to live up to your God-given potential.

I want to encourage you to ask God to give you a vision, so you aren't just doing the bare minimum, but you're soaring like an eagle, way above the ordinary. That's the abundant life Jesus came to give us.

Day Two

Have you ever asked God to give you a vision of what he wants you to do? Living without God's vision for your life is missing the abundant life Jesus came to give you. It is living in mediocrity. It is settling for so much less than God intends for you.

Ephesians 2:10 says *we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do*. God has a vision for each of us who are born from above and have been made part of his family. He has prepared this vision for us—these good works he wants us to do.

Here is one of the most common reasons we don't seek God's vision for our lives: **We're not willing to take a risk.**

Ron Hutchcraft tells the story of being invited to go hiking with some friends to see a breathtaking waterfall. So, as they hiked up the mountain, they came to a large stream they needed to cross to get to the waterfall. Not seeing a bridge, he said to his companions, "How do we get across here?"

"Oh," they said, "you have to walk across the pipe there." Ron looked at the pipe and saw it was small; it was wet; it was dangerous. And his first reaction was, "Thanks but no thanks. I'll stay here." But his friends urged him, "Come on. The view is on the other side. Come on; walk across the pipe."

Ron had a decision to make. Either stay where he was and miss the view or walk across the pipe. He decided to take the risky way, and he said, "I wouldn't have missed that view for anything. But I had to walk the pipe to get there."

Is Jesus calling you to walk across a pipe, but you are afraid to take the risk? Psalm 18:36 says, *You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn.* When we start across the pipe that looks risky, as soon as you set foot on it, the pipe becomes a broad path, and your ankles don't turn!

Walk across the pipe today. Ask God for a vision. When he gives you one that looks risky, go by faith and prove he can do more than you can ask or think.

Day Three

Are you a visionary? Do you ask God to give you a vision of what he wants you to do and be, and then fearlessly step out on faith and do it? Many times, we fail to soar like an eagle because we're afraid to take any risks. Here's another excuse that can keep you mired in mediocrity.

I don't have the talent, abilities, or experience it takes to be a visionary. Maybe you're thinking: People who take risks are gifted in some way or another. I don't have any special gifts. I'm just an ordinary person, who can do ordinary things in an ordinary way.

If this is your excuse, you are without excuse. Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

How many examples do you want of how God uses ordinary people? Start with Peter, James, and John—uneducated fishermen. Consider Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba—all great-grandmothers in the lineage of Jesus Christ—and all totally unqualified for the job. The Bible and church history are replete with examples of people who were used mightily by God in small and large ways, even though they didn't have the right credentials, the right education, or the right skills and abilities. That way, God gets the glory.

I'm too old to ask for a vision. Are you thinking: If I were in my twenties, then I could do something great for the Lord. But it's too late now.

Consider Caleb, who after 40 years of wandering in the desert, is allowed to go into the Promised Land. So, now 85 years old, Caleb goes to Joshua and says,

I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day (Joshua 14:11-12).

If you've been using age or some disability as your excuse for not asking God for a vision, pray "God, give me this hill—give me a vision of what you want to do with me now at this age in this time."

Day Four

What is your excuse for not asking God to give you a vision—a new beginning, a new passion for pursuing all he wants to do with you and through you? We're looking at some of the common excuses that keep us from the abundant life Jesus wants to give us. Here's one of those excuses:

I've made too many mistakes; there is too much baggage from my past for me to do anything great for God. If God only used people with perfect track records, there would be no one to use. God takes us where we are and tells us to put our past behind us and move forward to the good things he wants to do for us. Isaiah wrote:

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland (Isaiah 43:18-19).

There may be other excuses you have for your lack of vision, but could it be that you don't have a vision of what God wants to do through you because you've never asked for a vision? James wrote *you do not have, because you do not ask God (James 4:2)*. Jesus told us *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened (Matthew 7:7-8)*.

How do we recognize God's vision? Are you willing to ask God for a vision? You say, "I'm not sure I would know one if I saw it!" Good question—how do we know God's vision for us?

A vision from God will be born in love—love of God, love of the Lord Jesus, and love of others. A God-given vision will not depend upon your giftedness, your hard work, or your promotional abilities, though your gifts will be used and you will work hard. But the success of your vision will be a God-thing that can only be explained by his power working in you. And it will always be in harmony with God's Word.

I urge you to consider seriously whether you need to ask God to give you a vision, to help you step out by faith and realize the potential he has created in you, and the joy that comes when you walk by faith and not by sight.

Day Five

I've been hoping to inspire you to ask God to give you a vision—so you rise above mediocrity and soar to the heights for which God created you.

What does a vision look like? Here are five signs to help you identify your God-given vision:

Sign Number 1 – It won't go away. As you pray about it, it gets stronger, not weaker.

Sign Number 2 – There is a need for it.

Sign Number 3 – God will open doors for you. You will see some small and/or large miracles as God opens these doors. You will be amazed, frightened, awestruck, and excited.

Sign Number 4 – Your spiritual leader(s) will encourage you.

Sign Number 5 – God will give you the right people to help you.

Elsy Riungu was my friend in Nairobi, Kenya. Many years ago, at our conference there I spoke on the topic of asking God for a vision. As always, Elsy took to heart what she heard. She prayed about it and then began a ministry to help save marriages. She rented a venue near her home—with money she didn't have to spare—and started a monthly meeting for couples. She got speakers, planned the programs, advertised and invited, and for several years she continued this ministry.

After she began, she wrote: "Couples ministry is running well, as we meet once a month. It is exciting to minister to mostly young couples. I have had three separate marriages, and after counselling, two of them are restored and enjoying their union. My desire this year is to reach families in the rural areas, where the need is enormous. Pray for me."

She had no money, no support system backing her up. God gave her a vision, and she was obedient to it. And she was filled with joy to be doing what God called her to do.

Are you willing to ask for a vision? It begins with prayer, but at some point, you must put feet to your prayer. Start walking through open doors and just keep taking the next right step.

Remember, when it comes to pursuing your vision:

1. If you don't go for it, it will fade, and you'll miss the blessing. Use it or lose it.
2. The more you pursue God's vision for you, the more ability and gifts you will have to do it. God will stretch you and gift you like you've never dreamed. But this won't happen until you take the first step.