

# VISION FORWARD



## WHAT DOES “VISION FORWARD” MEAN?

The Vision Forward, since its beginning, has meant two things for me:

- 1) Our vision is to move forward. Never backward. And never to become stagnant in the present. “Forward” is not a destination nor is it a direction we set for ourselves. Jesus is our Destination and our Direction. We follow Him forward into the things He’s prepared for us and called us to do. We learn Him and are becoming a people conformed into His image.

“Forward” does not necessarily mean progress or a continual improvement. It is neither utopian nor evolutionist in my understanding. Pain and sorrow, weakness and brokenness, are not something that we, humanity, will ever fully solve or resolve by our own wisdom or strength. We may bring heaven to earth, yet this earth will never become heaven. For a heaven-like-earth we await the “new heavens and new earth” which Jesus Himself will create and bring to us.

But “forward” does mean “closer,” closer both in likeness

and proximity to Jesus. Our vision is to know Him more; and in beholding His glory, to become more like Him; and in becoming more like Him, for Him to live more fully in me, in this body, in this life.

- 2) It is also by vision that we move forward. Without a vision of a better future, it is hard to have hope and courage. It is by seeing, then, or by being shown, our hope in Christ that we move forward. We must be a people that sees, hears, and understands that Jesus is making all things new and how He is doing so in our day and time. We have been born and born again for such a time as this.

Without vision, we perish. As we see Jesus ever more clearly through his Word and by his Spirit, we see His will ever more clearly. It is not always nor usually that His will for us includes something that will make history or change the world, i.e. something for which we will be world famous. To “change the world” is something every generation aspires and believes in. But I do think, to a small degree, that we do “change the world” as we follow Jesus and walk in obedience to Him.

Loving your neighbor changes the world. Forgiveness changes the world. The Desens House changes the world. Sending groceries to Roots Cafe in Brooklyn changes the

world. We must remember that Jesus is accomplishing His will across the face of the earth through ALL who call upon His name even from the ends of the earth.

Dear Elim Grace, may we never be satisfied to stop moving forward. Content and thankful for all He's done? Yes! But never a spirit or an attitude that says, "I've done enough. I've seen enough." May we never cease to wonder at and adore the Lord Jesus Christ. May His mercy and grace towards us never cease to amaze us. May His love never cease to compel us. May we in the best of moments turn towards Him and in the worst of moments never turn away. May He ever and always be to us who He was, is, and always will be: our Vision, the Desire of our Desires, the Beloved Son of God, our First Love, our Supreme Treasure, our Precious Savior, our Eternal King, our Loving Shepherd, our one and only God.

Vision Forward!

## "I SEE": A THOUGHT ON RACISM

I see my daughter, Emagine Grace...

I see my good friends growing up...

I see my family and so many friends from so many different countries...

I see.

In the beginning "God blessed them," humanity. Every nation, tribe, and tongue. We cannot unbless those whom God has blessed. We cannot unlove those whom God has loved. We cannot unsee those whom God has seen.

We can choose to not look. To turn away. To hate.

"But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." 1 John 2:11

But Jesus came and Jesus comes. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:5

"And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." Mark 10:51

Jesus gives sight and restores sight. "Let us recover our sight."

If we are willing, Jesus will touch the eyes of our heart as many times as necessary to restore our sight.

Seeing through the eyes of Christ doesn't mean that I don't see that Emagine is black or that my childhood friends were brown. It means that I do see the difference! It means that I celebrate and value that they are uniquely and wonderfully made by God.

"If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20) The greatest evidence in support of anyone's claim that they love God is their love for others. All others. They see clearly in the light. *Because*

of the Light they see clearly. And they love the light, because those who love God walk in the light as He is in the light.

## BEWARE OF INTERNET PROPHETS

We are a Pentecostal church. We believe in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit and that His gifts are not only useful but absolutely necessary for us as a church today.

The gift of prophecy is a gift we hold dear to our hearts. We encourage it and we seek it. That being said, it is my conviction that the gift of prophecy best functions within the boundaries and structure of a local church. Why? Because as important as the gift itself is, so is the one to whom or through whom this gift functions.

In other words, character counts. Reputation counts. Accountability counts. Integrity is above skill or gifting in the establishment of any church office or function. And it is hard to know the integrity of a man or a woman who is not known among you or who is not at least personally known by someone you know of integrity.

Internet prophets abound. Youtube is a platform for anyone and everyone claiming to have a "word from the Lord". But before we listen and believe every "prophet" or prophetic word, we must ask ourselves, to whom are they accountable? Where do they attend church? Who is their spiritual authority? Who can vouch for their personal integrity in their home, in their marriage, in their community?

Remember, what counts is not whether or not someone has prophesied in Jesus' name, but whether or not Jesus can say to them and of them, "I know you." There are many who have prophesied in His name and yet Jesus says, "I never knew you." (Matthew 7:21-23)

Both the "skill and integrity of heart" (Psalm 78:72) of a person are known and measured up close, not far away. So let us be slow to share videos and articles of "prophets". The church is multifaceted and one voice is not recognized as an authority everywhere. That's not to say they haven't the authority to speak, but only that authority goes hand in hand with trust, and trust goes hand in hand with integrity, and integrity goes hand in hand with relationship.

## JULY PRAYER TARGETS

Take out your phone, set a 2-3 timer, and pray daily for:

- 1) That God would restore our sight, so that we might see others with His eyes - those we've never seen, those we've turned our eyes from, those we've looked down on.
- 2) That God would "dig out" new ears for us, so that we might hear the voices of the oppressed, the unjustly treated, the ignored, the brokenhearted - that we might listen and learn where we are ignorant of those hurting, broken, and oppressed all around us.
- 3) That God would heal our hearts, so that we might ask forgiveness from those we've sinned against and forgive those who have sinned against us - that we would move towards being a united church, uniting people, beginning with ourselves.