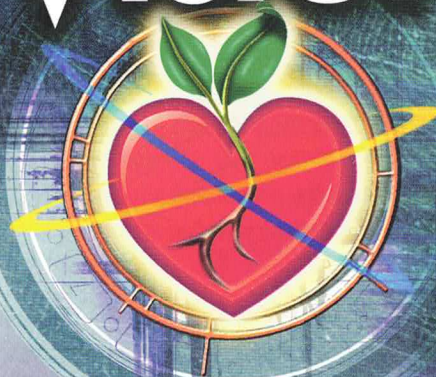
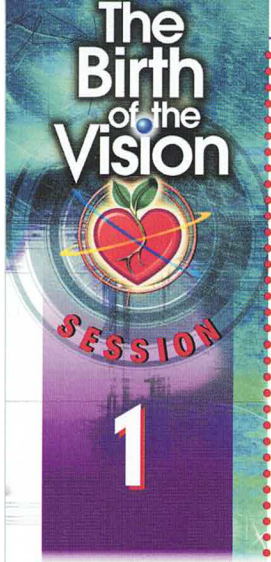


# The Birth of the Vision



**Do you feel it?  
Something stirring  
deep inside you?**

It's a thing that makes your heart surge—a thing of hope and anticipation. It's ready to be born within you, to come to maturity, and to carry you to heights you never dreamed possible. It's a thing called **Vision.**



A **blind** man's world is bounded by the limits of his **touch**;  
an **ignorant** man's world by the limits of his **knowledge**;  
a **great** man's world by the limits of his **vision**.

—E. Paul Hovey

## Introduction

### I. The Investigative \_\_\_\_\_ for the Need

<sup>1</sup>The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, <sup>2</sup>that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." Nehemiah 1:1-3

### II. The Intentional \_\_\_\_\_ with Those in Need

<sup>4</sup>So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept...  
Nehemiah 1:4a

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**III. The Instinctive \_\_\_\_\_ to the Need**

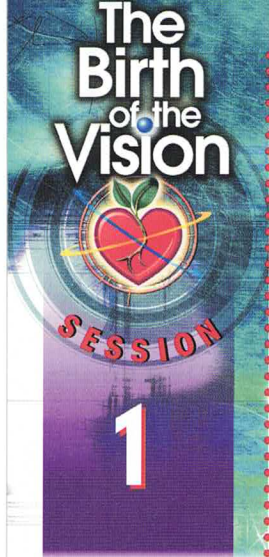
<sup>4</sup>...and mourned for many days... Nehemiah 1:4b

**IV. The Intensifying \_\_\_\_\_ for the Need**

<sup>4</sup>...I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1:4c

**V. The Intuitive \_\_\_\_\_ that You Could Meet the Need**





Give us a **clear** vision that we may know **where** to stand and **what** to stand for, because unless we stand for something, we shall **fall** for anything.

– Peter Marshall

VI. The Internal \_\_\_\_\_ for the Need

VII. The Initial \_\_\_\_\_ to Meet the Need

Conclusion

## QUIZ

Can you remember the last really great idea you had—that time a light seemed to explode in your mind? Try to recall the excitement you felt, the sleep you lost, and how you couldn't wait to implement your new idea. Vision transforms life.

This page is designed to help you think about how the seeds of vision are planted in your own life. You can apply the challenging ideas of our first week's study to your current situation. Answer these questions carefully and honestly, and you just may see yourself in a new way.

Are You a Visionary Leader? Keep Score Below:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	False		Sometimes			True	

1. I have a clear sense of the primary need that I am called to meet.
2. I spend the majority of my time working specifically toward my life's central goal.
3. I am confident that God is the source of my vision for my life.
4. I have experienced deep and powerful emotions, even pain at times, just thinking about my greater goals.
5. I talk about my vision frequently to those who are close to me and those who are under my authority.
6. I have every expectation that I will achieve my vision.
7. I expect my vision to leave a significant impact on the world long after I'm gone.

Your Vision Chart:

GRAND TOTAL

42-49 I'm a solar observatory telescope

35-41 I have eagle vision

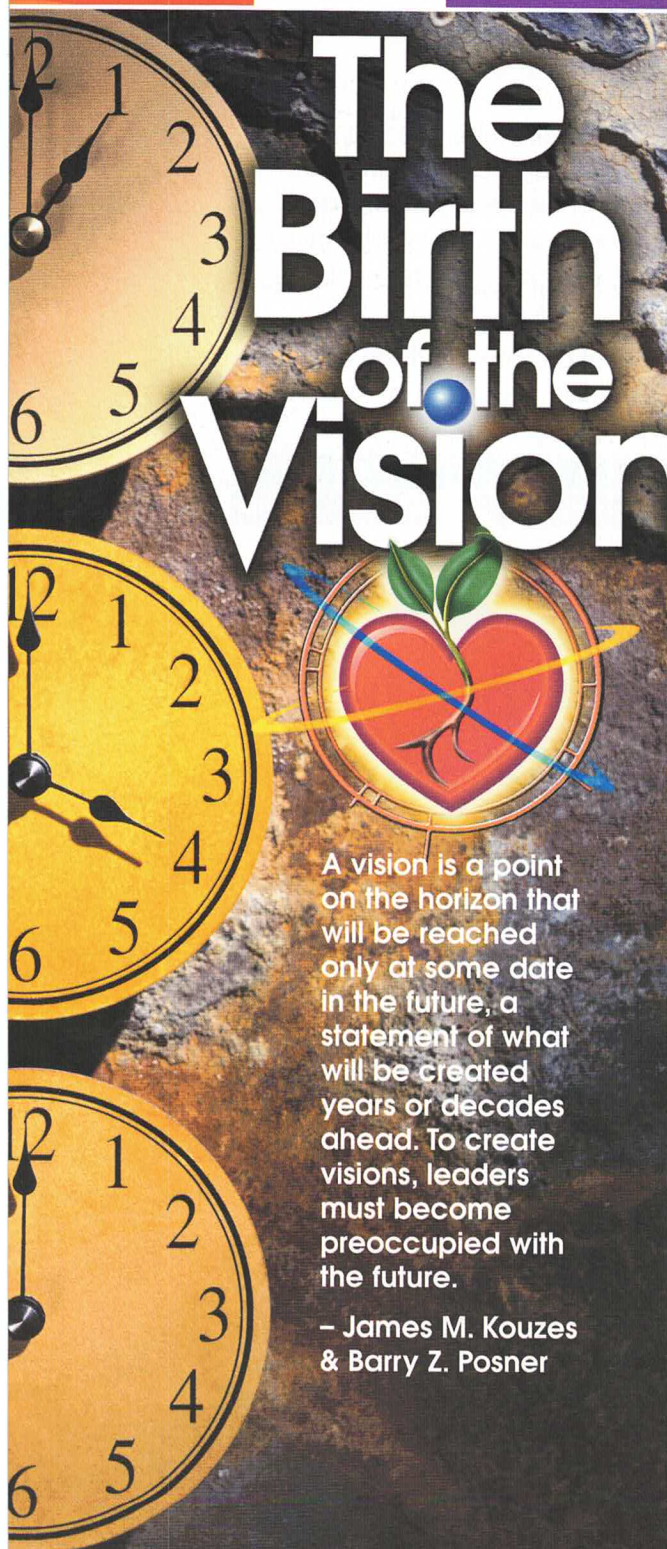
28-34 I miss some of the fine print

21-27 I'm a little near-sighted

7-20 Who turned out the lights?



# The Birth of the Vision



A vision is a point on the horizon that will be reached only at some date in the future, a statement of what will be created years or decades ahead. To create visions, leaders must become preoccupied with the future.

– James M. Kouzes  
& Barry Z. Posner

**I**t was one simple idea, and it totally captivated you. Do you remember? It may have been as ordinary as convincing the love of your life to marry you, or being hired for a special position, or being the best athlete on your team. The Big Idea seized hold of you. It ordered your thoughts and actions. Compelling vision is a powerful thing.

God designed us to be people of purpose—to pursue causes for which we would exchange our lives. When you find the vision for your life, you won't take hold of it; it will take hold of you. And it will begin quietly, through your **investigative seeking for the need** in the lives of others. You'll catch sight of a human plight that stirs you, and a spiritual nerve within you will be touched. Quietly, you've experienced the first step—the seeding process—of the birth of a vision.

**F**rom there, you choose to experience an **intentional sympathy with those in need**. First you see their need, then you feel their need, and finally you purposefully open your heart and place their need inside. Their need becomes your



need. Now you have the genuine seeds of vision burrowing into your inner soil. Those seeds are the genuine need of others.

Sometimes those seeds give birth to something deep in your heart that has staying power. The need seems to have leapt onto you, and now it goes wherever you go. This is almost a chemical reaction between a certain need and the way God made you. You don't plan it, but you experience the **instinctive bonding to the need.**

It's growing stronger, too. As the need takes on more substance in your heart and mind, you'll experience the **intensifying burden for the need.** You've crossed the line from objective observation to a soulful yearning for something to be done. You mourn for what you have seen. The burden weighs heavily and you cannot escape it.

In the back of your mind there is the thought that something must be done. Over and over again you see the snapshot of human need engraved in your mind, until you begin to glimpse your own face in the picture. You think about being the one to act. You're developing the **intuitive belief that you could meet the need.**

**Y**ou could—but will you? You're at a critical point. If this is a true vision struggling to be born, you'll develop the **internal accountability for the need.** Your heart begins to tell you that yes, you are the one. Meeting that need is up to you, and you feel a sense of urgency to do something about it—to take action. Softly wrapped around

your burden is the quiet but persistent confidence that you can and will do something—and that's when the final step takes place.

It's a transition from heart to hands. You take the **initial action to meet the need.** Perhaps it's a minor act on your part; what matters is you've done something. You've crossed over an invisible line from inwardness to involvement. You've injected yourself into the situation. It now seems clear that you're the person, this is the vision, and now is the time. So this is the reason you were put here on earth!

**Rolling up  
your sleeves,  
you realize  
your life is  
about to  
change  
forever.**



## Speaking of Vision

## INTERACT

There is one  
thing which  
gives radiance  
to everything.

It is the idea  
of something  
around the  
corner.

— G. K.  
Chesterton

1. How would you define vision? What makes Christian vision distinctive?
2. Who is the most visionary leader you've ever known? Tell how this person lived out a sense of vision. How did it affect you?
3. Using no more than one or two sentences, state your current vision for life. Then, describe the process by which you arrived at this vision.
4. How can we know our vision comes from God, rather than from our own invention? What are some tests we could apply that would help clarify this?
5. Describe why you feel the vision you are pursuing is so important to you. When your vision is fulfilled, what will have changed for you and others?

## INVESTIGATE

1. On a sheet of paper, **draw** a line from the left side of the page to the right. The beginning point on the left should be labeled with your date of birth. Leave a few inches after the point marking the present day.
2. You can make other marks to **denote** momentous events in your life—graduation, marriage, children, when you held certain vocations and positions.
3. Now, make a **point** on the line that shows when you first became aware of the idea that later became your vision. Note other points when your vision became more focused, more organized, and so on. Using a different color ink, make points of projection on the future portion of your line. These will show how you expect your vision to unfold.
4. **Pray** over that part of the line.



# "I Must Keep Going"

## DAY ONE

Today's Scripture  
Luke 13:32

*Good leaders  
create a vision,  
articulate the  
vision,  
passionately own  
the vision, and  
relentlessly drive  
it to completion.*

— Jack Welch

**S**trolling through a Japanese park, an engineer has a passing thought—wouldn't it be nice to combine rich music with outdoor beauty? That day, the engineer will conceive of the Walkman™—the tiny stereo with headphones.

A man takes an evening walk through the impoverished London streets. He is horrified. William Booth and his wife have been searching for a worthwhile life purpose, and here it is—their Salvation Army will bring millions of people to faith.

A fur trader in Labrador fishes in sub-zero weather. His catches freeze on the way up through the ice, yet they retain their flavor later. Clarence Birdseye, fur trader, will pioneer the multi-billion-dollar frozen foods industry.

Innovators? Yes, but what distinguishes these individuals is vision—the relentless pursuit of compelling ideas. Leaders are deeply motivated toward their goals, and they won't give in to distractions. They measure their lives by progress toward their destination.

### WordWise

Jesus focused on His vision. Catch a glimpse in Luke 13:31-33. The Pharisees tell Jesus that Herod, the king, wants to kill Him, and He'd better "go somewhere else."

Perhaps with a smile, Jesus replies, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.'...I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following...." (vv. 32-33). Focus. Determination. Jesus knows He must make an eternal difference during the few earthly days set before Him. That's the mindset, not just of the Son of God, but of any true visionary leader.

Do you have that kind of focus? When the distractions surround you today, saying you'd better "go somewhere else," how will you answer?

### InVision

Visionary leaders see the Big Idea from afar—and buy a one-way ticket.

# Samaritan Express

## DAY TWO

Today's Scripture  
Luke 10:30-35

*Keep Jesus Christ  
in your hearts and  
you will recognize  
His face in every  
human being. You  
will want to help  
out in all His  
needs: the needs  
of your brothers  
and sisters.*

— John Paul II

**B**ill's hobby is a little out of the ordinary. He climbs in his truck and drives to no particular destination. He's looking for stranded travelers beside the highway. Parking his truck behind their vehicles, he emerges with a can of gas, jumper cables, a jack or whatever is needed.

Bill isn't above poking around under the hood and getting his hands dirty. The only thing he won't do for his "customers" is accept payment of any kind. He is paid in wide eyes, dropped jaws, and startled expressions. He's made lifelong friends this way—no small perk.

Are you a "people person"? Some people thrive on human interaction. They place themselves in position to experience remarkable things. Just ask Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer who asked a fateful question about his friends back home. What if Nehemiah hadn't been there to pursue that topic? But he was, he did, the walls of Jerusalem were eventually rebuilt—and here we are studying his life and works thousands of years later.

### WordWise

Visionaries tend to be people who encounter and respond to human need. In Jesus' story, the Samaritan, "as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion" (Luke 10:33).

There had been others who passed by. They were good people—"church types." But they kept walking, accelerating to their pressing appointments.

Consider this: What if you walked with slower feet and wider eyes today? Might you see and experience something that will make your day memorable?

Nehemiah took the time to ask questions. A Samaritan took the time to bandage wounds. Real leaders find time for people in need. Call it Samaritan Express—and don't leave home without it.

### InVision

Visionary leaders have drive, but they brake for people in need.



# The Defining Moment

## DAY THREE

Today's Scripture  
Nehemiah 1:3

*Once a new idea  
springs into  
existence, it  
cannot be  
unthought. There  
is a sense of  
immortality in a  
new idea.*

—Edward  
De Bono

**N**ehemiah, stranger in a strange land, has done well for himself. He may be a servant, but he's on the palace payroll—cupbearer to the king. This means he guarantees the purity of food and drink, insuring against poisoners. His life has been calm and comfortable—until today.

News from home has arrived. A remnant of Nehemiah's people has been living in Judah, the homeland, holding on for better days. This remnant has been less a nation than a symbol of a hopeful future. Perhaps the glory of Israel will rise again. But now, “the wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire” (Nehemiah 1:3).

Nehemiah smolders. He feels the terrible news down to the depths of his being. For days the cupbearer broods, visualizing the calamity. One statement has completely disrupted his tidy world. And what will he do about it?

### WordWise

The seeds of a vision can be planted in many ways. They may come from ideas that fill our imaginations with wonder and delight; or they may begin with broken walls and burned gates.

However they come, vision seeds sink into the fertile soil of the right person at the right time. Nehemiah was a Hebrew with promising connections (royal ones) and the right gifts (stay tuned!). There was leadership potential within him that hadn't been tapped. It will take this defining moment for the visionary wheels within him to be set in motion.

When was your defining moment? Have you caught that sudden glimpse of the precious pearl, the buried treasure, and realized you've found something for which your life is worth exchanging?

### InVision

The power of a moment is quiet—but its sweep is eternal.

# The Message of Mourning

## DAY FOUR

Today's Scripture  
Nehemiah 1:4

*God whispers to  
us in our  
pleasures, speaks  
in our conscience,  
but shouts in our  
pain; it is His  
megaphone to  
rouse a deaf  
world.*

— C.S. Lewis

**P**astor Bill Hybels says that when he lost his father, he replaced his pain with a frenzied ministry schedule. It was the wrong thing to do, he realized later. A Christian counselor told him, “I urge people to radically reduce the pace of their lives. I urge them to review their loss, talk about it openly, think about it thoroughly, write about it reflectively, and pray through it.”

She continued, “It’s my experience that people want to run from their pain. They want to replace pain with another feeling as soon as they can.” Isn’t that true? When the beloved old family dog dies, we have a new puppy the next day.

But as Hybels points out, it’s the wrong thing to do—for us and for those around us. Grief is not a surplus emotion, for even pain is redeemed in the hands of a resourceful God. Mourning is our way of having an honest encounter with pain. Out of it comes wisdom, character, resolution, and even vision.

### WordWise

Nehemiah mourned the mental image of walls in rubble and gates in ashes. The once and future kingdom of his dreams had been violated, and he wept over it. “When I heard these words,” he would later write, “I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4).

In the palace of a king, he might have replaced his pain with another emotion. After all, what were those people to him, so many miles away? But the godly heart of Nehemiah was incapable of such dishonest evasion. He felt the loss, and he felt it deeply.

Do you know what it’s like to mourn for the heartbreak of a fallen world? Can you still feel something when you see war and famine on a TV screen? Why not get back in touch with the needs and pains of others that the Lord has called you to meet?

### InVision

Sometimes the city of light is best seen from the Valley of the Shadow.



# Attack— Now!

## DAY FIVE

Today's Scripture  
Ecclesiastes 11:4

*You can't build a  
reputation on  
what you are  
going to do.*

— Henry Ford

**J**une 6, 1944 is one of the most important days in military history. That's D-Day—the date of the Normandy Invasion by Allied Forces, the turning point of the Second World War. And it was nearly a squandered opportunity.

Watching the winds, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower could not make up his mind when to attack. Finally he said, “No matter what the weather looks like, we have to go ahead now. Waiting any longer could be dangerous.” A day's delay might have meant a military disaster.

Sometimes we know the right course of action long before we take it. We stand by the water, dipping in an occasional toe, afraid to take that dive. Have you ever felt this way about a career move or a family decision? Indecisiveness can be costly in terms of our opportunity and our courage. Each moment of delay stifles our momentum.

Nehemiah made a difference because he was willing to do something—not a moment too soon. He mourned, he prayed, and he fasted.

Then he stepped out of his circle of grief and promptly attended to the will of God.

### WordWise

Ecclesiastes 11:4 says it memorably: “He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.” The writer goes on to say that we cannot know the ways of the wind or of God. We can only sow the seed, push the plow, and farm the crops He places before us. In other words, there comes a time to stop calculating and begin innovating.

What decisions are you deferring? Is there some critical step you need to take? It's good to know which way the wind is blowing, but be sure that gust is not the voice of God saying, “Go!” Hesitation doesn't win battles, bring in harvests, or carry out leadership.

### InVision

You may be on the right track, but you'll get run over if you just sit there.

# The Birth of the Vision

SESSION

1

Into the Word

## God's Instruction for the Vision

Upon finding it, life has focus and meaning; upon losing it, the zest goes out of life. **Vision** makes a considerable difference.

In this week's studies in the Word, we'll examine the first seeds of vision and how they grow.

1

## THE LOSS OF LIGHT

### Revelation 2:2-5

In these verses, Jesus speaks to a floundering church. Why would He rebuke a church that was doing "hard work"? Explain.

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What is the significance of Jesus' command for setting things right?

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When have you worked hard but lost your "first love" for what you were doing?

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What are some things you "did at first" that you should return to?

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# 2

## THE ULTIMATE PRIZE

### Matthew 13:44-45

What aspect of vision does Jesus present in His two word pictures about the kingdom of God?

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What facts about the two treasure-seekers do you notice in these two verses?

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How might the seekers seem to the world around them? Is this important? Why?

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When in your life were you the most like the merchant and the field-worker?

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What idea or accomplishment do you want to gain so much that you would sell all you have?

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# 3

## TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

### Jeremiah 1:4-10

In this passage, the prophet Jeremiah receives his calling from God. What words would you use to describe his reaction?

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Why do you think a vision might have an uncomfortable side when we first encounter it?

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How do God's answers to Jeremiah apply to all true visions?

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Note the power of God's vision statement in verse 10. Why is it important to be able to put our visions into compelling words?

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How might God describe the great purpose He has set you on earth to achieve?

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## 4

## THE VISION DEEPENS

**Acts 13:1-3**

In Acts 13, the “regional” movement of Christianity becomes a world vision. What events bring this about?

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Why does Luke, the writer, make it a point to attribute the words to the Holy Spirit?

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How, in your view, do prayer and fasting serve as maturing agents for vision?

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Why is it significant that the vision in this passage is a “group thing”?

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Who are the people who pray with you about the key initiatives in your life?

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## 5

## RACE TO THE FINISH LINE

**Hebrews 12:1-2**

When the vision is fixed in our minds, we run—not walk—toward the goal. In Hebrews 12:1-2, how is the word picture of the track athlete appropriate?

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What kinds of hindrances might “easily ensnare” those of us pursuing a vision?

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What part does perseverance play in a long-term vision?

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How do we set our eyes on Jesus without losing concentration on our vision? Explain.

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What “runner’s rules” do you need to adopt as you race toward your goal?

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