

A Vision of Renewal

Bethany Assembly of God

1/14/2024

Introduction

I want to speak to you in a slightly different way than normal today. What I feel impressed to do is to talk to you about renewal in a manner that I would describe as a Pastoral Explanation and Exhortation. I want to better describe and explain our vision in the prayerful hope that you will understand it more clearly and that the Holy Spirit will unite our hearts in how we ought to move forward as a church family and that we may be stirred up with a revived passion for the Kingdom of God and the mission to which He has called us. Our short term vision is renewal. Renew hunger, hope, heart, and hospitality. Those are the four areas of focus that God placed in front of me when I began to pray four years ago about what we needed to do. Renew hunger - a desperation and dependence on God, particularly through prayer, and a desire for the work and gifts of the Spirit. Renew hope - a collective spirit that is leaning forward toward the future with faith and expectation that the best is yet to come. Renew heart - an increased focus on the mission of God abroad through missions giving and short term trips and an increased focus on evangelism in our own region. And Renew hospitality by caring for the needs of one another, and to those who come in from the outside.

We have a vision for renewal. This encompasses revival, especially by renewing our hunger and dependence on God and our desire for the work of the Spirit. The vision is to ready our hearts, lives, and church, for a move of God and to seek Him for it. But the vision also encompasses reformation. Think of it this way. How many of you like Fireworks displays? Fireworks are fun, but I've noticed something about fireworks: you can blow up a lot of money really fast. And when you go to a fireworks show, it doesn't usually last too long because of the expense. It's exciting; it's loud; but it's over quickly. On the other hand, think of a bonfire. A bonfire can be big, it can be intense, but it can also last. It may go through periods when it's big and bright and other periods where it recedes slightly, but as long as you are feeding the fire, it will continue to burn brightly. That's renewal: revival + reformation. It is continuous, not momentary. It doesn't just burn bright; it's long lasting. It's the expectation built on prayer that God's Spirit will work mightily and supernaturally among us, reviving our hearts through repentance, holiness, and urgency for God's mission coupled with the reform of organization that will aid in ministering to the saints and equipping us to make disciples. See Acts 6:7.

I believe that we have many of the pre-conditions and primary elements in our church, especially through our teaching and preaching ministry. We preach the whole Gospel of salvation by God's grace through faith and the sanctifying and empowering work of the Spirit. What I want to draw your attention to are the Secondary Elements of Renewal - the outworking of the Gospel in the church's life.

Our vision has been that we will focus on renewing Bethany's foundation for an overflow of God's presence in the Pioneer Valley and around the world. Our four areas of renewal are hunger, hope, heart, and hospitality. Look at each of these with me.

Renew Hunger - we want a renewed and increasing hunger for God's presence through the Holy Spirit and His gifts. That hunger comes through prayer by which we express dependence on God.

Renew Hope - when we talk about hope, we mean that there is a sense of expectation and faith for the future. We're leaning forward. It requires clear vision in all our ministry areas, which we have endeavored to formulate.

Renew Heart - renewing heart is all about the mission of God. It's about keeping the mission to make disciples the priority. We want to do this both here and abroad.

Renew Hospitality - it aligns with mission because part of hospitality is displaying the welcoming love of the Father to people. Community is imperative for every church and for every believer. The New Testament refers to the church as the body of Christ, calls us brothers and sisters. Read Philippians 2:1-3.