

A young boy who was shorter than most of his peers wanted desperately to someday play basketball in the NBA. Knowing that his son would never play professional basketball, the boy's dad asked the local coach if there was anything that he could recommend to make the boy taller.

The coach kiddingly replied, ***"Maybe you could take him down to the museum and put him on that medieval torture rack."***

Several weeks later the coach ran into the father and asked how the boy was doing. The father said, ***"Hey, I tried that stretch rack. It didn't make him any taller But he did confess about a dozen things he did that I never knew about."***

We all have our dreams, don't we. To play professional sports. To buy a brand new fishing boat with all the latest technology. To have our children become financially and professionally successful. To have enough accumulated so as to retire early.

Nothing is more natural than to dream.

BIG DREAMS

What most of us don't realize is that OUR DREAMS ARE TOO SMALL.

When **Michael Dell** was in college his parents drove up for a surprise visit. They were concerned that Michael's "hobby" – building computers in his dorm room – was distracting him from his studies. His father demanded that he get more serious about his college work, asking Michael, ***"What do you want to do with your life?"***

Michael infuriated his dad when he replied, ***"I want to compete with IBM."*** At the time, IBM was the dominant computer company in the world. Not long after that, Michael Dell dropped out of college and raised the capital to start his own computer business. By 1999, ten years after Michael began his company, Dell Computers overtook IBM as the nation's largest seller of personal computers.

If you're going to dream, why not dream big?

When I was a student, Cindy and I were part of study group that met for breakfast once a week. I remember studying with that group the Christian classic, ***Your God Is Too Small***, by **J.B. Phillips**. Phillips contends that the reason so many people struggle with faith is because their concept of God doesn't evoke awe at His majesty and power. It doesn't require worship. Their concept of God is too small even to offer them any hope as they deal with life as it comes.

In his conversations with people, Phillips discovered that many people seem to think of God as nothing more than a greater man, an angry judge, a soft and kindly grandfather, or a scientist who invented the Universe.

These concepts stand in sharp contrast to the God revealed in the Bible, who is almighty in authority over everything, who shapes the history of nations, who knows everything about us and is involved intimately with us in our triumphs and tragedies. The Biblical revelation of God is a One who supernaturally transforms the hearts and minds of His people, and implants a vision

in His people that conforms with His perfect thoughts and with His unsurpassed love for humanity.

If you believe in that kind of God, you'll have big dreams.

The God of Scripture, the God who made us, the God who has rescued humanity through His Son, the God we worship today, is a God who dreams Godly dreams.

JAMES AND JOHN

One day, James and John asked a favor of Jesus: ***“Teacher,”*** they said, ***“We want you to do for us whatever we ask.”*** These guys REALLY didn't know how to be tactful!! When Jesus asked what they wanted him to do, they replied, ***“Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”***

You see, they recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but they didn't yet understand the nature of His kingdom. They thought Jesus was going to liberate Israel and set up a new government. They wanted positions of power. They wanted to be the INSIDE GUYS, closest to the President. They wanted the prestige that would rub off on them when all Israel would hail Jesus as the nation's new leader.

They thought their close relationship with Jesus in the present should automatically translate into a political reward in the future.

Here is where James and John made their mistake. . . . **THEIR DREAM WASN'T BIG ENOUGH.** Jesus tried to tell them that His kingdom would have nothing to do with politics and earthly power – in fact, just the opposite. They were looking very shortsightedly at petty positions of influence. HOW SMALL!!

On the other hand, Jesus was asking them to SAVE THE WORLD!! He was asking them to lay down their lives for the ultimate dream, a kingdom where God reigns in every human heart. THEIR dream was WAY small in comparison.

BHAG

In their best-selling book, ***Built to Last***, James Collins and Jerry Porras coined the term BHAG (“Bee – Hag”). BHAG describes a bold, well-nigh impossible vision. BHAG stands for “Big Hairy Audacious Goal, B – H – A – G.

Common sense would tell you that a BHAG would intimidate many people and discourage them from trying. But BHAGs are paradoxical, according to Collins and Porras. The idea of attempting the impossible is so exciting and energizing that organizations usually experience an upsurge of motivation and innovation when a leader presents a BHAG to his people.

A great example of a BHAG is the vision announced by President John Kennedy in a speech on May 25, 1961: ***“I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the***

earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.”

Kennedy challenged our nation to do the MOST difficult thing. At the time he made his speech we were nowhere near having the technical ability to land a man on the moon. Some people were saying it wasn't even possible, but we know what the result was.

Jesus was trying to get his disciples to forget their petty power games for a moment so as to focus on the Biggest, Hairiest, Most Audacious Goal of all – to join with him in redeeming the world from sin. He was getting ready to lay down His life.

- He needed them to become witnesses to the world that, because of His death and resurrection, the chasm between God and humanity had been forever bridged.
- He needed them to forget about being masters, and instead become servants.

AMBITION AND LACK OF FULFILLMENT

Jesus has no problem with people who are ambitious. God created us to dream, to aspire, and to strive for the best. It takes ambitious people to make the world a better place.

If you aspire to have your own business and employ people, or to become a corporate CEO, . . . If you aspire to become noteworthy and to be recognized in athletics or in the arts or in show business . . . or if you want to have a successful career and give your kids a comfortable life. . . . **Jesus is O.K. with all that, but he would ask you one question: “*Is that it? Is that the extent of your dreams?*”**

All these sort of things come and go – they're only temporary. What are they going to matter as you approach the end of your life? Who will be running your business 100 years from now? What becomes of all your things? Who's even going to remember you? Don't you want more significance out of life than that?

This past year we saw two of the richest men on earth, **Bill Gates** and **Warren Buffet**, make a major commitment of their wealth to revolutionize education in America and to bring an end to three of the world's most widespread deadly diseases.

Why did they do this? Maybe, after accomplishing so much in business and finance, they realized their dreams were not big enough.

There are people all around us who have achieved their goals, whose children are launched into successful careers, but who have no earthly idea why they feel

so unfulfilled. They have it all, and yet they have nothing – nothing that lasts. Their dreams were too small. Their dreams were temporal, not eternal – they were for things that don't last.

THE BIGGEST DREAM

But what must it be like to be part of saving those who are lost and broken by sin? Think what it must be like to bring the light of hope to people who are discouraged about life. What must it be like to make an eternal impact?

God is asking us if anybody cares anymore whether people believe in Jesus.

Jesus certainly cared. He said that the reason he came into the world was to *“seek and to save the lost.”* He cared so much whether lost people would believe in him or not, that sending His disciples into the world to tell others was the primary focus of His work with them as he neared the end of His ministry. He cared so much that He gave His followers the charge to be His witnesses locally, nationally, and finally worldwide.

Jesus clearly saw a world that was lost. He saw people caught up in cultural religion, but who did not know God. He saw people who had no answer for the problem of sin – and He offered the world HOPE. He offered reconciliation with God to those who put their faith in Him.

The story is told about a Sunday School teacher who wanted to explain God's simple plan of salvation to his class of first graders. Wanting to find out what the children thought about how people get to heaven, he asked them a few questions, just to get the discussion going:

“If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale, and gave all my money to the church,” he asked, ***“would that get me into heaven?”***

The children all answered, ***“NO!”*** The teacher was encouraged.

“What if I cleaned the church every day, and bought the pastor a steak dinner every week, would that get me into heaven?”

This time the children giggled, and again they answered, ***“NO!”***

The teacher said, ***“Well, what if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children and loved my wife, wouldn't that get me into heaven?”***

The children answered again, ***“NO!”***

The teacher looked out over his class, hopeful that the children would say something about the need to believe in Jesus. He asked them, ***“Well then, how can I get into heaven?”***

A boy raised his hand and said, ***“You gotta be DEAD!”***

You just can't take anything for granted when you're talking to children.

Jesus saw a world that was lost and dying in sin. By offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin, he offered the world hope and reconciliation with God to all who would receive Him.

Now He's depending upon US. Things are not that different in OUR time. **Our culture is AWASH with cultural religion and secular thinking, NEITHER OF WHICH give an answer for the problem of sin.**

Meanwhile, people are dying – in sin – without knowing the freedom and deliverance from sin and guilt that Jesus paid for with His blood and with His own life.

People are caught up today in cultural religion – even many who identify themselves as Christians, and some who go to worship services regularly. But the cultural religion of today is not the gospel of Christ. It's a belief in vague concepts about God, and it leaves people in doubt as to what comes after death. They lack assurance. They're longing for hope.

Or, people have an entirely secular mindset. Their view of reality does not include a Creator God, or any concept of life after death. They crave significance and meaning.

My friends, I know we're planning a Mission Trip to Russia, and it's just as important that we do that, as what we do here in Columbus – but let's be reminded that our mission field is also in your neighborhood. It's in your card club, and in your children's soccer club. It's in your place of work. Our mission field includes your own family members, and your children's friends and their families – their parents.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

TRINITY GROWTH INITIATIVE

The **Trinity Growth Initiative** represents a permanent improvement to what we're already doing in evangelism outreach. The Growth Initiative is designed to raise Trinity's visibility as a place where people can find help for life's hurts, ask questions honestly and find connection with God. The plan is to more than double Trinity's annual advertising budget for the coming years, and to plan a whole new annual outreach event that would become an yearly tradition that everyone looks forward to, and to which it's easy for Trinity members to invite their unchurched friends. But it's one thing to invite and attract new people. It's another thing to make a difference in their hearts and lives.

The Growth Initiative will also launch a new area of ministry called "Guest Relations". . . . the purpose of which is that, when newcomers attend worship services or other events at Trinity, they are intentionally loved and cared for in specific ways – ways that we all can help with – and thereby, our guests are

opened up to the love of Christ. They've already experienced it in the specific, concrete, loving actions of Trinity members. There are literally dozens of specific, proven ideas for making worship guests feel important and cared for.

Experience in churches all across the country indicates that when first time guests in a church come away from that church feeling cared for, they are far more likely to return the next week. They're far more likely to join that church. **WE'RE GOING TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN HERE!**

Guest Relations will also track our newcomers more systematically, and follow up with ongoing care, and in helping them become connected in Trinity groups and ministries, because newcomers who don't connect will eventually drop out. We're going to prevent that from happening.

Because Guest Relations, by its nature, is going to be labor-intensive, and will require a significant amount of organization, I'm recommending that we hire a part-time Guest Relations Coordinator.

Think of this entire Growth Initiative as a "one-two punch". First comes attracting and inviting newcomers, and then we lavish the love of Jesus Christ on our guests when they're here – and in following up with them.

Of course there's a cost involved but not so much as you might think. In addition to the growth in our budget that's needed each year, just to cover inflationary costs, **we're looking at an additional \$30,000.00 annually** – for advertising costs, for materials, and compensation for a part-time Guest Relations Coordinator.

What's exciting to me about it is its intentional focus on growth, and (really) just doing some simple and practical things that fulfill the law of love.

And it's the LOVE OF CHRIST, seen in His people here, that will grow this church.

RESPONSE CARDS

Our costs at Trinity go up about 3 or 4 percent annually, and thanks to your increases in giving we've been able to meet that each year. But now we're looking at **ADDING TOO THE BUDGET** a new ministry. **THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE TWO CARDS TODAY, INSTEAD OF ONE.**

As many of you know, the Financial Faith Commitments Trinity members have made in the last several years are confidential – between you and God. You fill out the Faith Commitment Card, you drop it in a self-addressed, stamped envelope, you bring it forward and present it during the Walk of Faith, and **WE DON'T OPEN IT, WE DON'T LOOK AT IT . . . THIS IS A FAITH THING.** After the

first of the year, your Financial Faith Commitment Card is mailed back to you, unopened, as a reminder to you of your financial commitment to your church for 2007.

But THIS YEAR, we need to know, before we budget for 2007, that you will support the Growth Initiative. That's why you have the other card with the red heart on it.

BUT LET'S LOOK AT BOTH CARDS:

FIRST, take the Trinity Growth Initiative Card (with the red heart on it).

- **THIS CARD WE DO NEED TO SEE.** Please don't seal it in your envelope. We need to know how much additional financial support is there for the Growth Initiative.
- **So what you put on THIS card is an additional amount that will be added to the amount you enter on your Financial Faith Commitment Card.**
- **So let's look at this card . . .** (explain card). EXAMPLE: \$5.00 more per week in your regular offering will result in \$260.00 more in 2007 for the Trinity Growth Initiative.

NEXT take your Financial Faith Commitment Card . . . (explain card) but, you know what, if you don't want to go through all those calculations, and you know what you'll be giving next year, just enter that amount in the line where it says: ***"Amount of Weekly Offering."*** **BE SURE TO INCLUDE ON THIS LINE THE AMOUNT YOU ENTERED ON THE GROWTH INITIATIVE CARD.**

- **Now seal your card in the envelope you brought with you, or you can use one of the blank envelopes provided in the pew rack – Be sure to clearly print your name and address on the blank envelope.**

In a few minutes, we're going to celebrate God's providing for His work at Trinity with the WALK OF FAITH. We want you to have a couple minutes now to complete both of your response cards. Gayleen will play a little music, then I'll pray with you before the walk of faith.