

Jan/Feb 2005

BUILDING A WINNING VISION

By Dr. Arthur Chang

One of the great gifts of the New Year is the mega-opportunity it presents to bring a clean page of opportunities to the business of living the life you desire. It is true that such opportunities exist in every moment and one does not, and should not, wait for a New Year to fully take advantage of those positive changes that we wish to bring about sooner in our lives.

That fact doesn't detract from what makes the New Year a specialist in dream building and vision casting. It is easy to understand why this is so, for we can clearly see that the collective intentions of humans are focused optimistically here, giving rise to a surge of collective creative energy. Those who make the proverbial New Year resolution intuitively can see this gigantic tidal wave of consciousness and need only to get on the surf board of her own personal vision for the ride of her life.

Dream Time, Vision Time

The New Year is dream time or vision time. We should not contaminate it with thoughts of past failures. It is about what can be, not about what has been.

It is about taking responsibility, not about blaming and fault-finding. The last thing we should do is to disparage the efforts that we have made that have fallen short of their mark. Humans, when they miss the mark, are nature dreaming creatures. In true Thomas Edisonian fashion, we can choose to see an apparent failure as one path that doesn't lead to our destination. T. S. Eliot tells us, "We shall not cease from exploration," and indeed we will not. Poet Emily Dickinson doesn't think we need much to access this extraordinary power to vision and revision our lives. Emily writes:

To make a prairie,
It takes a bee, a clover and reverie.
But when bees are few,
Reverie alone will do

Dr. Phil, Phillip McGraw is now one of the larger than life personalities on television. To make the prairie of his dreams he seemed so ordinary that he fits Emily's insight that he had neither bee nor clover; he lacked what seems to be the essential ingredients of building his prairie of dreams. Perhaps this is why so many are drawn to Dr. Phil. He reminds us of how incredibly gifted the most ordinary of us really are.

Vision Casting

Vision casting, or deciding on what your life is about, is crucial in being a self-responsible and spiritually mature person, and most certainly to anyone who wants to co-create with God his or her life. You simply must decide on what you want to do with your life while tapping into your Infinite Wisdom and Power.

Vision casting is what leadership is about. Leadership is doing the right thing and management is doing things right. We are required by life to provide both—to bring good leadership and good

management to our lives. If we don't manage our resources when we have them we will soon lose them. The old proverb says, "A fool and his money are soon parted." If you don't have a vision for your life, just build one. The New Year is the right time to do it. It doesn't matter that you didn't do it on January 1; the creative spirit of the New Year will last right into February. Just get started.

Breathing Life into Your Vision

If you have a vision that seems more dead than alive you may revive it now. Some clues for rebuilding our vision are offered in the Book of Ezekiel in the Bible. Ezekiel, the prophet, is as stark a pessimist as his older contemporary Jeremiah. Yet, Ezekiel is the one who left Israel with one of the most enduring images of hope, symbolizing that pessimism of our situation need not deteriorate into hopelessness.

As a young man, Ezekiel serves as priest in the Temple. In 598 BCE, when the Babylonians first occupied Jerusalem, Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon with several thousand other prominent Jews, and he becomes the first prophet to live outside the land. From Babylon, he prophesies that Jerusalem will be destroyed, and it is in 587. After the destruction, Ezekiel predicts that the Jews will return to their homeland and that a new Temple will be rebuilt on the site of the old one. According to Ezekiel, God sets him down in a valley filled with lifeless bones, which have been in the hot sun for so long that the flesh had been stripped from them. This symbolizes dead dreams. God asks: "O mortal, can these bones live again?" We are getting the feeling that with God there is hope; all things are possible.

"Only you know," Ezekiel replies, whereupon God orders him to prophesy to the bones: "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord . . . I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live again." As Ezekiel pronounces these words, the bones stir and begin to come together. Flesh grows on them, and soon the bones form into bodies, but there is no breath in them. Here the story is informing us that we are to animate our dream, and that word-power is creative life-empowerment. God instructs Ezekiel: "Say to the breath, thus said the Lord God: "Come, O Breath, from the four winds, and breathe into these slain, that they may live again." Breath reenters the corpses, which stand on their feet constituting a vast multitude. And God tells Ezekiel: "O mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed." Race opinion is a mistaken belief that comes from judging by appearances. God then instructs Ezekiel to prophesy to the House of Israel symbolizing God's dream in us:

"Thus said the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of the graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel . . . I will put My Breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil." This optimism for life is the spirit that a New Year holds for those who can hear, sense, and feel the creative pulse of the time, the holy breath that makes dreams live vibrantly and meaningfully.

Building Your Vision

Dr. Ernest Holmes wrote: "Man's mind should swing from inspiration to action, from contemplation to accomplishment; from prayer to performance . . . No greater mistake could be made than to think that we must separate life from what it does." (Ernest Holmes, SOM, 477). Vision building is thinking into the future and determining where you or your organization wants to go. That was what prophecy meant for Ezekiel.

The linear approach is from here to there. That is what most people's vision looks like. This looks like goal-striving rather than building a vision. In Cervantes' saying, "The road is more important than the inn," goals are the "inns" along the journey while the vision is the journey of life itself. An alternative way of thinking of a vision is the notion of Field Visioning, which some thinkers believe is more powerful than a linear vision. What happens when the vision becomes the surrounding field? Rather than a destination that pulls you or the organization forward, field vision permeates and guides you or your organization. Margaret Wheatley says, "All employees . . . who bumped up against the field (of vision) would be influenced by it." This is to say: when you are living your vision, everyone who comes into your sphere of influence is likely to feel it. Developing a new vision starts with clarifying what your operating vision currently is, then thinking of what vision you really want and making changes in your current vision to match your new vision.

What is your personal vision?

The greater the alignment of our personal vision to the new vision, the greater the force for achieving the vision. This is true when we are part of an organization as well as when we are doing it for ourselves.

Don't confuse vision with mission. Vision is knowing where you want to be or what you want to become. Vision is leadership. Mission is how to achieve it. Mission is management. Misplaced leadership is being a straw boss. Early in our marriage, I used to tell my wife Cecile how to cook until she straightened me out on the difference between being a straw boss and a leader. I left the kitchen and only come back when it's time to eat.

Leadership and Vision

Management directs the hacking of a new path through the jungle; leaders make sure it is the right jungle. One of the important aspects of leadership is to be able to distinguish between two important functions. We often become so focused on the day-to-day reality of what we do that we lose sight of whether we are doing the right thing. Leadership will ask:

- 1) Am I getting the best results possible?
- 2) Are there some areas of efforts that need to be addressed?
- 3) Do I need some knowledge and skill in certain areas?
- 4) Is my strategic plan effective?

Clarify your vision:

1. Clean the slate of clutter, confusion makes you out of step with the universe;
2. Simplify, for in creativity, less can be more;
3. Clarify, know your vision and don't let the sun set without touching it in some way;
4. Plan, help your spontaneity along by laying out a structure for the mind;
5. Put first things first;
6. Love more, it makes you and everyone a winner;
7. Take care of your health, it's one of the real treasures of your life;
8. Be as prosperous as you can and share it;
9. Live fully but not just for yourself;
10. Remember, spiritual growth is a life-time affair.

Use the New Year to build your vision and build the best life you can imagine!