

## Bucket Lists

Joel 2:28; Colossians 3:1, Matthew 6:33    October 22, 2017    Dr. Sharlyn DeHaven Gates

In the 2007 movie, *The Bucket List*, Jack Nicholson plays a billionaire named Edward Cole and Morgan Freeman plays a car mechanic named Carter Chambers.

Until Edward and Carter ended up in same hospital room they had never met each other before. As different as they are, they find they have something in common. They have to come to terms with who they are and with what they have done in their lives, but they also both have a desire to complete a list of the things they want to do before they die.

Although the doctor strongly objects, they leave the hospital and set out to accomplish the things on their bucket list. Of course, it is funny and it's also a tear jerker at times.

Today, I want to ask you to think about what is on your bucket list? Is there something you really want to do while you still have the breath to do it? Please share what that is.

When I asked this question – what is on your bucket list – the other night at bible study, I have to say, the women there have very high standards. There was nothing really selfish or extravagant on their bucket lists. Unlike me, who has a great desire to go spend time in Italy. I don't even know why I want so much to go to Italy but I always have.

I'd also like to be a successful writer. That is a truly a lifelong dream. Growing up, I always wrote stories and said I was going to be a writer. My mother, bless her heart, always said back, "Writers are a dime a dozen. Better get a real job." Ha! So I did! Writing sermons.

But of course, this morning we are not just thinking about our personal desires and goals. We are looking at the vision and the dreams God gives us for the church. The church that Christ established. The church in mission and ministry.

When I asked the question in bible study about what is the dream and vision you have for this church – guess what the number one answer was:

We need young people – families, young adults, children.

I'll bet that is the number one answer in any church the question was asked in. I want to say three things about that ...

First of all, we just absolutely have to stop saying we don't have children. We don't have young adults. Because we do!!! We don't have many, but we do have children and those children have wonderful, young parents. To say we don't have any children or young families, completely disvalues them. Says we don't see them. Don't recognize they are here. It says if we don't have more than one or two families, they don't count.

We don't do that intentionally, of course. Every one of us loves the children who come and is happy just to see our young families. But do we let them know how much we value them? How precious each one is to us? We need to figure out how to show them how much they mean to us.

Second, what are **you** doing to bring young families into our church? Are you looking for them? Asking them? Calling them? Offering rides? Telling them about the church? It takes a village to even get them to notice we are here and we care.

And the third thing I want to say is that there really are other things we have to be about. We try. We earnestly try together to bring young families into our church family. But in the meantime there is much work to be done. We must have more dreams and vision than just to have more young families.

So, I want to ask all of you ... besides the desire to have lots of young families active among us, what is on your bucket list of things you would like to see for the church? What is your dream for Holly Presbyterian Church? In five years, how would you like for this church to look – not talking about the building, but about the mission and ministry and fellowship.

They say in marriage and family counseling that couples and families who have dreams for the future, are healthy. They have a common goal to work toward, to believe in, to look forward to together. I think that it is equally important for a church family. We need to be aware of what we do that is important in the church right now. We need to be knowledgeable about what our purpose as a church is and set goals for how we live out our purpose.

Christ's church is here for a purpose. To do the mission Christ calls us to do. And what is that mission? To love God with all that we are. To worship and praise God. To enjoy him forever, as the Westminster Catechism states as the answer to "what is the chief end of man?"

We are people that are to have the mind of Christ. To love one another, to teach and to grow in the study of the bible and in the faith. To do the great commission that Jesus left the disciples, and us, his current disciples: to make disciples of all nations and to baptize people in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

That is a direct commission from our Lord Jesus Christ. And he also said to feed the hungry; to give a drink to those who are thirsty; to visit the sick and those in prison. He says in Matthew 25 that if we are reaching out to those poor ones, we are also reaching out to him.

So what are some of the dreams you have for the future of this church?

### ***Share dreams for future.***

Someone was talking to me just the other day about the non-denominational churches and what they offer and how they have grown. We are not in competition with them, although it seems like we are sometimes. They are reaching many people who are not wanting a more traditional service. And that is a good thing! Because, really, we are all one body – together the body of Christ.

But we were talking about how all those churches do these fantastic things during worship and other fellowship moments. The truth is, even if we wanted to be that kind of church, we just couldn't be. We don't have the financial resources they have to do the big things.

But, what we know is that it does take resources to make the dream come true. Paul says the church is equipped by God to accomplish the ministry that God has called us to.

Do we have the resources? You bet we do. The resources I see are sitting right now in the pews. Some of you are actively at work to accomplish our ministry goals. Some are taking a break. And some are not sure where your gifts lie.

This series is about extravagant generosity. And you all know that it takes generosity to make a church be able to do the things we need to do. When we give our time and our energy out of love and passion for what God has done for us – when we all answer that call to see where our gifts lie and then use them joyfully and generously – that’s extravagant generosity.

As members of Christ’s family, it is us who are called on to make our lives and our hearts to be extravagant in our generosity. Because without people saying I’ll help; I’ll use my gifts – the truth is we might never know that accomplishment as the church of Jesus Christ.

When we give generously, we are setting our hearts on spiritual things; we are making the dreams and visions that come from the Holy Spirit a possibility. We are building a future – a foundation that is firm; we are creating that life that is really life.

The thing is – when we who are in love with God have a dream for our lives – our personal lives – those dreams usually point to dreams for the future of the church as well. We manage our personal lives in a way that helps us be generous in all we do and that helps us be able to carry out God’s mission in the church as well.

God says through the prophet Joel:

*I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see visions.*

Dreaming dreams; having visions are possible for us all. But they come from the Spirit of God. It is so important that we create space and time to allow God to speak to us; to show us his vision. And then we generously work together to make those dreams come true.

What is on your bucket list?