

## IV. MILE-MARKERS AND CELEBRATIONS

- A. Another thing the Spirit whispered to Bill was about mile-markers and celebrations—how you inspire people to stay on the journey.
- B. If you're trying to move people from *here* to *there*, where on the journey are people the most vulnerable?
  - 1. It's not in the early stages, because once you've made staying *here* unthinkable, you get some positive momentum.
  - 2. It's not when you're almost *there*; that part is exciting because the destination is right around the corner.
  - 3. It's in the middle of the journey where the whole vision gets imperiled.
    - a. Bill's daughter Shauna is training for the Chicago Marathon, and Bill has been doing some training runs with her. He has learned that it's in the middle third that runners break down.
    - b. People can fire up, but it's along the way that gets really hard.
    - c. When Bill stepped back into his operational role a couple years ago, he tried to fire up the vision—but then life happens.
      - i. Within just a few months of getting the church hooked into a new vision, the U.S. experienced a major economic downturn.
      - ii. Willow leadership had to adjust their budgets, reduce and realign their staff, and build up the church's cash reserves.
      - iii. Momentum was broken.
    - d. When things like that happen, people forget how bad it was when they were still back *here*, and they forget how wonderful it's going to be when they get to the destination.
- C. If you're partway through the journey and watching people lose steam, Bill's first recommendation is to refill their vision bucket.
  - 1. Leaders think that once they fill people up with vision, it should last for a year, but every person's vision bucket leaks.
  - 2. Their vision buckets have holes in them—representing the fact that people have real jobs, and they don't think about church 24/7.

## SESSION ONE: FROM HERE TO THERE

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3. You have to refill the vision bucket more regularly than you think you do.
- D. Secondly, and even more important, you have to celebrate every mile-marker you possibly can on the way to the destination—even if you create them arbitrarily.
  1. What keeps people on the journey is some sense of hope that they're going to get *there* someday.
  2. Mark these forms of progress, gather the troops, thank God, and cheer them on.
  3. Bill was talking to a pastor who was raising money for a new education building at his church, and the economy had severely impacted his campaign—it cut it almost in half.
    - a. The pastor said they were going to hold a celebration dinner because despite the worst recession of their adult lives, they had raised enough money for the basement and first floor of the new building.
    - b. They were going to celebrate that they were halfway *there*.
    - c. This pastor had turned a setback into a celebration of a mile-marker.
  4. For Willow's thirty-fourth anniversary, they had a donor who knew the significance of celebrating progress, and he was proud of the progress the church had made despite a very difficult economy. The donor volunteered to buy Chicago's famous Lou Malnati's pizza for the 20,000 people who attended the anniversary services. It lifted everybody's spirits, and it was one of the most powerful celebrations they've ever had.
- E. A few years ago, Bill did a six-month study on the power of inspiration and found that experts say there is a 40 percent differential in productivity between an inspired teammate, church member or worker and one who's uninspired.
- F. Jesus, the greatest leader who ever lived, would monitor the inspiration level of his followers, and when he saw that they were getting discouraged, he took swift action.
  1. He would take them away for a retreat in the mountains where he would pour himself into them and pray for them.
  2. Sometimes he would load them into boats and take them to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to get a breather.
  3. Sometimes he would remind them that they were going to receive huge rewards in the next life for their heroic efforts in this life.
- G. Jesus knew that inspiration matters—it matters to individuals, churches, NGOs, businesses and families.
- H. When was the last time you threw a party to celebrate not just the destination but the mile-markers along the way?
- I. When you do this, it keeps people on the journey all the way to the destination.



4. As a team, you're probably in the middle of pursuing some long-term goals or making some big changes—moving people from here to there. Take time right now to take Bill's advice to celebrate the progress you've made. If you'd like, share one or two signs of progress that you personally are thankful for. You might also decide to schedule a party or set aside a time in your weekly gathering when more people can join you to celebrate.