

# VISION, BALANCE & MOVEMENT

*How to Navigate the Changes and  
Transitions in Your Ministry*



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# **VISION, BALANCE & MOVEMENT**

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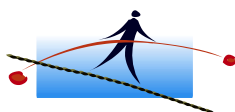
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In every organization there are times of transition and seasons of change. Organizations are dynamic rather than static--especially the local church. In the local church, managing change and moving through transition often provide church leadership with new opportunities to accelerate or decelerate in the undertaking of their vision.

Knowing when to speed up or slow down in the pursuit to fulfill mission and vision statements can bring to local church leadership a feeling of fulfillment and success, prevent vision frustration, and produce a sense of balance and movement.

Vision can be defined as a revelatory ability to see the desired end before the beginning. To move from beginning desire to end fulfillment necessitates strategic implementation. Any strategy or programmatic attempt to implement a vision for a local church must be balanced with the right movements.



This truth impacts individuals as well as every organization and its leadership.

Everything has its time, especially to accomplish plans, purposes, goals and objectives. Church leaders need a real sense of timing to affect solid decision-making as well as manage the corporate vision. It makes for discouragement and frustration to speed up plans when changing conditions, circumstances, events and situations dictate the need to slow down, and vice-versa. Traveling down the "vision-pursuit" road at the wrong speed, whether it's too slow or too fast without regard to road conditions, can cause vision-stall and failure.

Imagine a tightrope walker at a circus. He carries a balance beam to maintain balance as he moves across the wire. If you look closely you will observe that there is balance in his every movement. If he stopped moving, eventually he would lose balance and fall. To avoid falling, he speeds up and slows down at different point

and under varying circumstances as he journeys across the wire.

It has been said that, "success is not the destination but the journey." As church leaders trek along on their pilgrimage to accomplish their mission and fulfill their visions, they too will need a "balance beam" and a knowing of when to speed up or slow down as they face the winds of change and times of transition. This sense of balance will help leaders avoid feelings of disappointment and failure.

## **Understanding Transition and Changing Seasons**

A good context for understanding change and transition is found in what I will call *the law of expansion and contraction*. It is believed that all things in the universe, and the universe itself, expands and contracts. Examples of this include; air, water, metal, concrete, wood, your heart and lungs, and even your waistline. If this is true, we can apply this universal law to ourselves and to our local churches.

We should understand that there can be no expansion without contraction and further realize that our lives and the life of organizations will experience a series of expansions and contractions. The book of Genesis puts it this way:

*While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease (Genesis 8:22).*

The key is to learn how to flow and grow with these changes. I often tell my audiences that, "to live is to grow and to grow is to change."

Life itself as well as ministry is a growth process. Growth necessitates changing seasons and transitions from one season to another. For example: Birth to childhood, childhood to adolescence, and adolescence to adulthood.

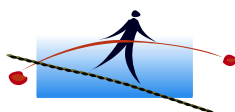
Change can produce growth or a lack of growth and growth certainly produces change.



The transition periods connecting one season to another presents opportunities to manage the changes and deal with the growth or lack of it.

On an organizational level, what does all this mean? How do expansion and contraction, change and transition affect a pastor's or leader's vision in the local church? We can't answer these questions without first making mention of some conditions that are becoming increasingly common in churches across the nation.

It is no secret that church leadership on all levels of responsibility are being shaken. Pastors and leaders are distracted and discouraged with local church ministry and the challenges it brings. For many leaders, the fire and passion for ministry is no longer there. Leaders are torn by constant roller coaster-like conditions such as: Increased membership growth followed by massive pruning and purging; meeting the budget and then being frustrated because of budget shortfalls month after month; being a happy spiritual family, then feeling like the



internal conflicts and infighting are impossible to reconcile; having a trusted staff and leadership team and then feeling betrayed by those in whom you placed your trust and confidence; having a feeling of success on the inside during times of prosperity, then wake up one morning feeling like the bottom has fallen out and that you're destined to fail.

There is the birth of a vision, the trying of a vision, the death of a vision, and the resurrection of a vision. An expansion that becomes a contraction is not designed to abort or defeat the vision but rather to try the vision, crystallize and refine the vision. The trying of our vision comes to develop the inner strength of the vision as well as to provide the visionary an opportunity for reflection. Reflection involves waiting on the Lord:

*But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31).*





Reflection is how we learn. If we reflect on who we are and Whose we are, and affirm that it was God who birthed the vision in us, and refuse to abandon our journey, then this transition will provide us with the growth, learning, pace and strength to proceed with the vision--notwithstanding the changes.

As a result of these changing conditions--coupled with feelings of isolation and inadequacy, family and financial problems--some pastors and church leaders are dropping out of local church pursuits. Many are being drawn into other areas of ministry and others have left ministry all together for secular careers. In light of these changing circumstances, what is God saying?

### **Managing a vision in the midst of rapidly changing conditions**

*The Lord answered me and said: Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it, for the vision is yet for an appointed*



*time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:2, 3)*

God speaking through the prophet says, visions are to be ran with not sat upon--*that's movement*. Visions are not to be scrapped, tossed aside or disregarded but pursued.

Furthermore, God says, that visions have appointed times of fulfillment. Regardless of changing conditions from season to season as outlined above, whether these circumstances out of necessity force the visionary to slow down but never to stop, or present situations that make speeding up favorable--*that's balance*. There is no vision balance without movement. Isaiah 40:31 provides for running and walking, *but not stopping*.

However, God says, wait for the vision to be fulfilled, not quit if it takes longer than you thought. God will not deceive or disappoint the visionary. Without vision balance and the right movement, the visionary will bail out on the vision.



What we fail to understand is that, many times the fulfillment of the vision is ready for us but we're not ready for the fulfillment of the vision (Psalm 37:4). If this is true, why wait? I believe it is important to wait to renew our strength (Isaiah 40:31).

As alluded to earlier, as we wait, through reflection, seizing the learning and growth opportunities, we learn to be unaffected by what others may think, say or do. We grow up in faith and are unmoved by the appearance of things. We become strong enough to remain constant in the face of outer changes. So while we are waiting for the vision, the vision is waiting for us. God in His appointed time will hasten or delay the fulfillment of the vision for the overall good of all involved (Hebrews 10:35,36).

## **Staying focused in the midst of changing seasons**

In the midst of rapidly changing conditions, whether ministry related or family-related, how



can pastors and church leaders stay focused on their visions? How can we achieve vision balance and movement? I believe the key word here is *manage*. Balance and movement is all about managing a vision.

In the same way the tightrope walker, as pointed out in my earlier analogy, manages walking across the high wire, pastors and church leaders must learn to prepare and flow with the changing conditions, circumstances and events in their churches--rather than running for the parachute to bail out.

There has to be a way to continue to run with the vision. Managing is about going with the flow of things and staying on top of things. It is easier to "go with the flow" rather than resist seasons of change and times of transition when we know that God has designed our expansions and contractions to help us grow and develop spiritual strength (Romans 8:28).

When you experience a contraction, wait on the Lord and prepare for an expansion. In other words, when people start leaving your church,



finances start dwindling, when you start feeling detached from family and friends, when you feel the pain of having been betrayed, all hell breaks loose and you don't know what to do-- relax, give thanks and feel the joy (I Thessalonians 5:18; John 15:1), and get spiritually organized (Romans 1:21).

Let your strength and leadership show forth, not your anxieties and fears--realizing that the universal roller coaster must go down in order to come up again (Galatians 6:9).

God will send unexpected resources back into your life and your ministry (Ephesians 3:20). There can be no expansion without contractions and no contractions without expansions (John 12:24).

Therefore, you achieve continued balance and movement of your vision through self-management in the face of changing conditions. While going with the law of change, if you are to remain on the "transition tightrope" of fulfilling your vision without falling off, then you must guard the thoughts of your mind and heart

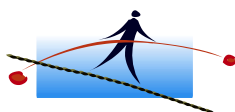


(Isaiah 26:3,4), remain joyful and thankful, and live in the consciousness of the presence of God (Psalm 16:11).

## **Knowing when to speed up or slow down**

It is vitally important that you understand that God doesn't allow the changing conditions that threaten fulfillment of your vision to come into your life and ministry just to frustrate, stress or intimidate you (I Corinthians 10:13). I believe that God allows these situations to teach you. If you accept this view, then all difficult situations and adverse changing conditions in life and ministry become viewed as opportunities to learn when to speed up or slow down in the pursuit of fulfilling your vision.

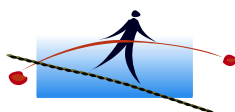
For example, you're in the middle of a capital campaign to finance a building project and after several years of believing for this vision to be fulfilled, you're almost there. You're excited, giving God all the glory. You're counting on pledges made by the membership to put this



venture over. You show up at your church one Sunday morning just to learn that a significant percent of your membership base that had pledged large amounts of unpaid money toward this project decided to join the new church down the street, where it is commonly reported that the move of God is really going on. And none of these departing members make good on their pledges. Your lending institution and contractors are unable to give you more time. What do you do? Do you think you missed God with this aspect of the vision? Do you scrap the idea all together? Do you quit the ministry? Do you go home and kick the dog and feel and sorry for yourself? *Absolutely not!*

If you understand the need for vision balance and movement, as a local church leader you have only two choices: *speed up or slow down.*

If God gave you the vision, then God will perform the vision in His time and season (Habakkuk 2:3). Therefore, to speed up, run ahead of God and presumptuously commit to the completion of the building project could spell



disaster. The obvious choice to make is to slow down, reflect and ask yourself, "what did I learn?", and see what God is saying about times and seasons.

It's like driving an automobile down a one-way street and suddenly you notice a large sinkhole in the middle of the street. At the sight of the sinkhole, you don't turn off the engine and forget all about your destination. You don't get out of the car kick the tire and swear to never drive again. And, you certainly don't speed up unless you have a death wish. What do you do?

You slow down, proceed with caution and carefully negotiate the vehicle around the sinkhole and continue toward your destination.

So how can you know when to accelerate or decelerate your vision to have spiritually healthy balance and movement as you travel down "vision-pursuit" road? Simply put: You stay in tune to the Holy Spirit who is your guide (John 16:13) and keep your eyes on the prize and flow with the road conditions and refuse to let any of





them become a distraction or deterrent from keeping you from pressing on (Philippians 3:14).

Don't let any one or anything turn you around!

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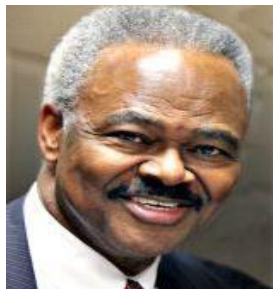
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**Dr. Jerry M. Williams** is founder and senior pastor of Agape Word Fellowship in Raleigh, North Carolina. He has an Apostolic ministry that proclaims a life-changing message of unconditional love and acceptance, reconciliation, and restoration. He also has a track record for training and equipping believers for the work of the ministry.

Dr. Williams is the founding father of International Covenant Connection, a relational network connecting ministries in covenant. In addition to pastoring and serving as president of Sonship Bible College, Jerry also serves the Body of Christ as a teacher, conference speaker, and consultant to churches in areas of ministry management and leadership development.

Over the last forty-four years, he has served as senior pastor of four churches in three states; preached in Africa, Europe, and Panama; hosted daily radio and weekly television programs; and, has helped established other churches. He has also trained and sent out other ministries into fruitful works.

He is also a North Carolina Dispute Resolution Commission Certified Superior Court Mediator approved to conduct mediated settlement conferences in Superior Court civil actions. His mediation practice and interests include civil law actions, church and ministry disputes, family, business, consumer, employment and intra-organization disputes.

Dr. Williams was called to the Gospel ministry in 1974 and has been licensed and ordained by Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Full Gospel churches. He graduated from West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia, with a B.A. in Psychology; he attended the University of Minnesota Law School for two years prior to enrolling in seminary, where he earned a Master of Sacred Literature and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana, and a Juris Doctor Degree from William Howard Taft University's Taft Law School in Santa Ana, California.

Dr. Williams resides in Raleigh with his lovely wife Joyce. They have five children: Jason, Jerrae, Jenelle, Jereel, and Jeremiah.