

## **A Healthy and Dangerous Christian**

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I have tried to imagine some questions that you might be asking about your new pastor. Here are a few I came up with: "Does he HAVE what it takes to be our pastor?" "Can he make our church GROW?" "Can he deliver GOOD sermons every week?" "Will he BE there when I need him?" Or perhaps a more important question: "Is GOD with him?"

I'VE been asking some questions, too: "When it's ALL said and done, what will REALLY matter?" "How have MY experiences in life uniquely equipped me as a pastor?" "What does GOD want to accomplish in Lancaster?" Or perhaps more significantly, "What does He want ME to accomplish here?" It's the answer to this last question that I want to share with you today.

I believe God wants me to equip the members of the Lancaster SDA Church to 'BE' 'HEALTHY' and 'DANGEROUS' Christians. (Repeat)

There are three words I would like to explain in this vision statement.

The first one is the word, "Be". For a lot of my life I have been taught what I am supposed to DO. But I remained unsure of who I am supposed to BE. It's who I AM that really matters. Jesus gives a great illustration of this in **Matthew 7:15-18**. (Read) Here is a law in life. The type of tree determines the type of fruit. An orange tree will produce oranges. An apple tree will produce apples, not oranges. We are like trees. Who we ARE, determines the kind of life we live. If we want to live a different kind of life, we need to become a different kind of person. In verse 15 of Matthew 7, Jesus says that even if a wolf dresses like a sheep, it's still a wolf. Even if it mingles with the sheep, eats grass like a sheep, tries to 'baa' like a sheep, it is still a wolf. The only hope for the wolf is to become a sheep. Well, you say, that's impossible. Exactly. But with God all things ARE possible. God can make us into someone good, who will naturally do good. Just like a good tree naturally produces good fruit.

So my focus as a pastor will be on equipping you to BE the person God created you to be. The first mandate of Christ in the Great Commission is about making people who they are supposed to BE. You can find the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:16-20**. I will just quote the first part. Jesus says, "Go, therefore, and make disciples." I take this as my mandate. My first priority will be helping you BE that disciple; to be the unique person God created you to be.

The type of person God created you to be is a healthy Christian.

This is the second word I would like to highlight in this vision statement: "Healthy".

I've seen a lot of corn growing around here. How do you know if a stalk of corn is healthy? You may look at how tall it is. Or you may ask, "How green are the leaves?" Or you can examine the ears of corn. "How many ears of corn are on the stalk? What do the ears of corn look like? Are they full of worms? Do the kernels cover the entire ear?"

What does it look like to be a healthy Christian? How do I know if I am a healthy Christian? If we were to rate ourselves on a scale of 1 to 10, I'm sure most of us would give ourselves a low score.

None of us are really a good example of a healthy Christian. But I thank God that Christ is. He rates a 10 in terms of being healthy. Because of Him, we know what a healthy Christian looks like. Christ is the definition of a healthy Christian.

I believe when people looked at Christ, they could tell He was healthy in every way. Physically He was healthy. Emotionally He was healthy. Spiritually He was healthy. His life revealed ALL the fruit of the Spirit. He radiated love, peace, & joy all the time. John records His farewell address to the disciples, before His death. In **John 14:27**, He tells them He is leaving HIS peace with them in place of the world's. HIS peace remained even when people were trying to kill Him. In **John 15:11** Jesus tells the disciples He is leaving HIS joy with them. HIS joy overflowed and was never exhausted. In **John 15:12** Jesus tells His disciples to love each other like HE had loved them. Because of HIS love, He laid down His life for His enemies. No one was too ugly or too mean for Him to love.

This is what it means to be a healthy Christian. This is what a healthy Christian looks like. It's radiating love, peace, and joy all the time. You say, there's no way I can do that. That's impossible. Exactly. But with God all things ARE possible.

Now we come to our third and last word to highlight in our vision statement: Dangerous. God wants us to be dangerous Christians. What does a dangerous Christian look like? **Revelation 12:7-9** tells us that there was war in heaven. Satan and his followers fought against God. Can you imagine? Well, they lost. Satan and his followers were thrown down to earth. Ever since, God has been a threat to Satan. When Christ came to this earth, there was immediate conflict. But once again Satan lost every time. In **Matthew 8:28-34** Matthew records the story of two men possessed by demons. When Christ approaches, the demons immediately realize they are in trouble. They cry out, "Why are You coming to US? Have you come to torment us?" Christ's very presence made Satan and his hosts tremble. Christ defines for us what a dangerous Christian looks like.

What about us? Do we make Satan and His forces tremble? Luke records a story in **Acts 19:11-16**. There were seven brothers. Their dad was a high priest. They tried using Jesus' and Paul's names to cast out demons from people. They walked up to this man with a demon, and said what they thought were magical words. But the demon talked back. He said, "I know Jesus. And I know Paul. But who are you?" The man with the demon jumped on top of them. These seven brothers barely escaped alive. They were not dangerous Christians. But the demon had respect for Paul. When Paul spoke, they fled. He waged war against Satan and his followers. And he prevailed, in the name of Jesus Christ. He was a dangerous Christian. What about us? Can you IMAGINE... a whole church filled with people as dangerous to Satan's kingdom as Paul was? You say, "I don't want anything to do with Satan. He's a lot stronger than I am." You're right. He is. We are no match for him. It would be impossible for us to win one conflict with him. But with God all things ARE possible.

THIS is what I believe God wants me to accomplish as your new pastor: To equip you to be healthy and dangerous Christians. And I have to say, that's impossible. Amen. That's the kind of work I want to be involved in. Something that only God can do. How about it? Shall we move on into realm of the impossible? Shall we give God the opportunity to do through us what only He can do? If you're with me on this, I ask you to stand.