

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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The Best Is Yet To Come

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Hey, this is Mark Batterson, pastor of National Community Church, welcome to our podcast and thanks for being a part of our extended family. We're in a series called 'Yes and Amen'. And we're casting vision for where God is taking us as a church. If you'd like to be a shareholder in that vision checkout <https://theaterchurch.com/vision> Enjoy the message.

When I was 21 years old, I was in a stadium with about 10,000 pastors listening to the pastor of the largest church in the world. He said something I will never forget. He said, show me your vision and I'll show you your future. Right then in there I began saying, God, would you give me a vision for my life, a vision for the church that I hope one day to plant. Now, it was not an Instagram, it's more like a Polaroid. It took many years, but God began to birth a vision for a church that is life-giving, a church that dares to be a little different, a church that's more known for what it's for than what it's against, a church that crosses racial and political and socioeconomic lines, a church that when you miss church, you actually miss church.

Now, here's the thing about a God size vision. You never get there. That vision grows with you and you grow with that vision. But here's what I know for sure, without a vision, the people perish, Proverbs 29:18. We're in a series called 'Yes and Amen'. You should remember that. If you're a guest, welcome, all seven of our campuses thrilled and honored that you would spend the weekend with us.

Last weekend I talked about two trains, one of those trains it's called 'so far, so God', the other one is 'the best is yet to come'. God is coming at us from two different directions. God's faithfulness is pursuing us from the past and God's sovereignty is bearing down on us from the future. And we live where these two trains meet and it's called the promises of God. Now you see these train tracks throughout scripture. Psalm 23:6 *surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life*; that's 'so far so God'. And then Ephesians 2:10, *we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works prepared for us in advanced*, that's 'the best is yet to come'. Now those two theologies, those two realities meet in the middle at a place called the promises of God. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says this, *for no matter how many promises God has made, they are yes in Christ*. But the verse does not end there you have got to flip this coin because it says *through him the amen is spoken by who, by us to the glory of God*. In other words, we have to add the amen.

What I want to do that this weekend is talk about this train called the best is yet to come. I want to cast vision for our next chapter as a church. Now last week we were pretty theological, this week we're going to get a little logistical, okay, I want to talk about who, where, when, why, and what. And we may leave how for next week, but here we go.

Let me start with why, and I think Simon Sinek would approve. At the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens an American marksman by the name of Matthew Emmons was one shot away from the

gold medal. He had a commanding lead going into the final round of the 50 meter three position rifle competition. Now he had averaged 9.3 on his first nine shots. All he needed was a 7.2 on his 10th and final shot. The gold was as good as his. He took a deep breath. He aimed, he fired and he hit the bull's-eye, but the sound indicating a hit did not sound which caused some confusion. Here's what happened. Matthew Emmons made the oldest mistake in the book. He was shooting in lane three and he aimed at the target in lane two. He cross fired, that's the technical term. Emmons finished in last place. Why? Because he aimed at the wrong target. Please hear me; if you succeed at the wrong thing, you fail. It's like the pilot that came over the intercom and said I have some good news and some bad news, good news making great time, bad news, we're lost. Is that not a commentary on our culture? A lot of people going so fast, but what are we aiming at? I remember reading something about a hundred years ago, it feels like, I read this book 'Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' and do you remember habit two? Begin with the end in mind. Stephen Covey said something so good, he said, 'some people are so busy climbing the ladder of success that they fail to realize that it's leaning against the wrong wall'.

So, what is our why? What is our bulls-eye? Let me ask this a little different way. What are the angels in heaven applauding for? In Luke 15, Jesus tells three stories. He talks about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. And then he says something twice. If Jesus says something twice, you might want to spend a little bit of time right there. Here's what he said, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who do not need to repent. Can I tell you why we exist; to start parties in heaven? How do you do that? I'll tell you exactly how you do it. You help people find their way back to God; you help people find faith with their fingerprint on it. That's our why. That's our bull's eye. In other words, we exist for the people who aren't here yet. If we were talking about target audience, if I can use that term, listen, we exist for the people that aren't here yet. I promise you, we want to love you, serve you and bless you and disciple you, but that is not the end game. It's about you and me loving and serving and blessing and discipling the people that God is putting in our path. I think we need a little bit of the paradigm shift. You know, we live in a consumer culture. I'll be honest; it's really hard to check that at the church door, isn't it? Now listen to me, nothing wrong with shopping for a church. You got to find something that fits, but I don't think it should be just about what you get out of it. Listen, I hope you're a part of this church because you believe in it enough that you're investing your time and talent and treasure. See, it's more about what you can bring to the table and listen, when you have a church that's focused, not just about what I can get out of it, but what can I bring to the table? Its game on, God's kingdom going to come, his will is going to be done.

Now, way too many churches cross firing. Am I right? In fact, probably too much friendly fire, but I want to share something that's encouraging; I just think you need to know this. This week, our DC Dream Center, we hosted a gathering for pastors. Now, do you know how hard it is to get pastors in the same room together? It is not easy. We had 71 pastor's show up this week, which first of all, it's amazing. But you know what I love from different denominations, different racial diversity and guess what? We love each other and we're for each other. And so I just want to say, listen, I'm about to cast some vision for this church, but I want you to hear my heart. It's not about the name over the church door; it's about the name that is above all names. Hashtag same team, right? We're in this thing together. All right, let's do what angels applaud. Make sure our ladder is leaning against the right wall. Let's make sure that we are aiming at the right bull's-eye.

Let me talk a little bit about what and when. A few things up front, taking notes, you can jot these down, I said this last week, you cannot go to church because you are the church. Now I'm going to talk some about a building that we're building and no apologies for that. But I think when we talk about that it's so important that we remember that the church is not a building. Okay, we are not one church with seven campuses, we have thousands of campuses, we are wherever you go.

Second, no church is perfect. Can I tell you why? You're part of it and so am I. Listen, as soon as I am completely sanctified, I will let you know, but I would not hold your breath. You know I have issues just like you do. You know what a church is? It's a bunch of imperfect people, but it's our imperfections that proclaim the grace of God.

And third, we need different kinds of churches because there are different kinds of people. Now you may have noticed we are not the most traditional church on the block. Does that make us better or worse? No, it makes us different. Okay. Just as you have a unique fingerprint, I think every church has a unique church print. We all have the same mission; it's called the great commission, go and make disciples. But then vision is the way that we give unique expression to that. And so if the Kingdom of God had departments, we would apply for research and development. Why? Because we believe that there are ways of doing church that no one has thought of yet. Here's the bottom line, if you're going to reach people that no one is reaching, you've got to do things that no one is doing. And that's what we're about to do. We have turned a crack house into Ebenezer's Coffeehouse, we have turned an abandoned apartment building into the DC Dream Center. We have never turned a car barn into a prototype campus. You know, I don't know too many churches that have gone longer or grown larger without a permanent facility, which it owns and operates as a church campus. And we love that, right? But what got us here; it may not get us where God wants us to go next. I think the key word here is prototype; it's what it is, this is a Beta test, this is proof of concept. And if we get this right, we don't just get it right for future campuses. I think we did it right for the urban church.

I want to show you a couple of pictures. First one is an aerial view, the building; the property I'm going to talk about, it sits on a city block. The building itself is about a hundred thousand square feet. And, even after phase one, two, and three, which I'll describe, we'll still have an acre and a half of roof deck right up above us. In other words, we can grow with this building; this building can grow with us. Now it's actually two buildings. East side was built 1891. I think we've got a picture of what it looks like a hundred years ago. It was the Navy Yard Car Barn for most of its history. It was the last stop on the red line, it was the turnaround, it was the place where streetcars were repaired and rerouted. I just think that there's something prophetic about that. Now in 1988 and it was painted blue, very blue, very blue. Now I wanted you to see it and all of its glory because we will try to take the blue out of the blue castle in due time. And so let me give you a little sneak of what it may look like after we're done with it. And again, just one artist rendering, going to take a little bit of time to get there.

Alright, let me break this down, I want to you a blueprint of the building. Phase one is yellow, it's about 25,000 square feet an event venue will seat about a thousand people and we'll use it for concerts and conferences and corporate events. Why? Because we want to be a blessing to our community. We have neighbors knocking on the door, are ready to use it. We'll also do

leadership summit as a church. We'll do parenting events, maybe some worship nights. And you know what we'll have built in facilities for childcare. Now construction right now, fast and furious, we were hoping that we might hit Easter, not going to happen and that's okay, that's okay. From where we stand right now, we think that a certificate of occupancy hopefully we will get that in June and so stay tuned.

Now, phase two, light blue, it's about 20,000 square feet of kids ministry space. We're aiming at the end of this year for delivery and it will serve as a child development center Monday to Friday and I'll come back to that. But listen, we'll have a kid's theater; it will actually be larger than our Miracle Theater. We'll have classrooms, enrichment rooms; we'll have an indoor playground. Our neighbors are going to love us. Five years ago we had about a hundred kids, last year about 512 kids across our campuses. What have you been doing? Listen; if you keep doing what you're doing we're going to have a thousand kids in three years. Can I give you a vision for this space? And it really is Psalm 22:31, I can't even tell you in my daily Bible reading, I come across this Psalm a few weeks ago and it's just one of those verses that man it got in my spirit. Here's what it says, in fact, I want to put it up on the screen. It says *Babies not yet conceived will hear the good news*. Ah, how exciting is that? Did you know about 70% of people put their faith in Christ before the age of 14? It sure seems to me like it might be a wise thing for us to invest some energy and some resources on our kids and on our youth. In fact, can we just give it up? NCC kids, NCC youth! Love it. So, I think this will be one of the best investments we ever make. I think this is compound interest to the third and fourth generation. When we talk about doing things that'll make a difference 70 years from now, this is what we're talking about.

Now, phase one, I shared this last week pretty unbelievable, fully funded. We will do phase one debt free, which means that now we can focus on phase two and can I just continue to ask you to pray about the part that God wants you to play? Listen there a little pledge card in the Next magazine and listen if you're part of this church, then would you pray about adding your amen to this vision? And we'll talk some more about that next week.

Let me touch on phase three, a 60,000 square feet. It's dark blue on the blueprint and a for what it's worth, the footprint a little bit larger than union market and ceilings a little bit taller and we have two levels, not one. And so a tremendous potential for a mixed use marketplace, co-working space. I think it be a place where we incubate entrepreneurs where we conscientiously create jobs. Now if you are new to NCC, you might be thinking that 'I thought this was a church'. I know that sounds a little out of the box, but stick with me. We have a core conviction that the church belongs in the middle of the marketplace. Jesus did not just hang out in the synagogue, hung out in wells. Wells were natural gathering places in ancient culture. It's why we built Ebenezer's Coffeeshouse. Why not create a place where church and community can cross paths? And then every penny of profit we give to missions. And so we will do it on a much larger scale with this particular vision.

If we think church is 70 minutes on the weekend, then we need a bigger vision of what God's doing. Listen, I would even say we want to do church in ways that aren't called church. What we want to do is create some side doors where we can love on people who might not darken a church door. Now, by the time we're done, this will be a building where you can work and eat and play and pray. We'll brand this building, we'll sub brand the event venue, the marketplace,

the co-working space, and I want you to know two things. One, not going to happen overnight and two past our pay grade. Okay? This is something that's bigger than we are, but we kinda like that around here. You know, I love what George Bernard Shaw said. He said 'there are those who look at things the way they are and ask why, I dream of things that never were and ask why not'. What I'm saying is that this is a why not church.

In urban planning there are these things called desire paths. Instead of building sidewalks, you let foot traffic determine where those sidewalks will eventually be placed. I think there'll be some of that with phase three. Again, we don't have it all figured out. We want your ideas; we want input from the community. I mean, we have a few hunches; it sure seems to me like there oughta be a wedding venue up on top of this castle. Am I right? It seems to be begging for it. And there's really not much of anything like that, at least in this neck of the woods. Listen, if our neighbors say, hey, what we really want and need is a gym, that's something we would think about, it was something we would pray about it. I'm just saying that this is a little bit of wet cement. Okay. And we have a little bit of time to figure it out. In fact, timing's a little bit tenuous. I'm going to tell you why. Because we have a tenant and we're committed to that tenant landing on its feet. And so we have extended a least once, we have extended it a second time because listen, we want everybody to win. Okay. And so we want to approach this thing where it is a win-win scenario, but hoping that the game plan for phase three can initiate in 2020.

Alright, you're doing great. How are we doing? This is a lot to digest. Let me touch on where and then we'll talk about who and then we'll be done. You'll find a map on page 22 of your Next magazine. Our prototype campus is right where three communities intersect. This is kind of cool. It's actually one corner of historic Capitol Hill and we own two corners, southeast corner is this car barn, northwest corner is Ebenezer's Coffeeshouse and so, it is in historic Capitol Hill, but we're right across the street from the Navy Yard. And then we border the riverfront, which is the fastest growing neighborhood in DC, seven blocks from the baseball stadium. In fact, there's a Nats parking lot right across L Street. And guess what? We have a lease on that parking lot, 210 parking spots. Can I tell you how many, how much it costs, free99 and we don't even get it, but we'll take it, we are not arguing with it. Actually about 500 parking spots within three blocks, two Metro stops, bus stop, and then a block from 695, so tremendous accessibility.

Alright, I want to switch gears and I want to talk about the elephant in the room. Two weeks ago, Washington Post cited a study that found that DC had the highest intensity of gentrification of any city in the country. More than 20,000 lower income residents have been displaced between 2000 and 2013. Now, gentrification, it's when an influx of investment changes the built environment, which leads to rising home values, a family incomes, education levels of residents and that seems positive at face value. But there is a downside and I think it's the poor who often pay the price because they can no longer afford the cost of living. Now, I'm not going to deep dive this. I just want you to know that not only is our team aware of it, listen, we're studying it. We're praying into it and I want you to know we are committed to not being a part of the problem, but being a part of the solution. How? I'll give you a couple of examples. Phase two, this child development center that I mentioned, did you know that at 2015 study found 7,610 childcare spots for 22,000 kids under the age of three. That is a tremendous gap, that's why there are three year waiting list, it's why it's one of the mayor's top initiatives. And listen, we just happen to believe that the church ought to solve the city's problems for it, okay? That we outta be

meeting real needs in real time and here's the deal, that is not a win if it's not a win for everybody. We've got to make sure that we cross those socioeconomic lines and we're committed to do that.

When we get to phase three, we'll create hundreds of jobs. The question is for who? Listen, it wouldn't be wonderful if we could create jobs for those who need them the most, that for returning citizens, for refugees. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our kids over at the Dream Center get their first job? Wouldn't that be amazing? I think sometimes we think that loving our neighbor means being nice. Now beats being mean, but I think it looks like some of the things that we're talking about there is a practicality to spirituality. This is about us not just building a church but blessing a city so that if we went away, we would actually be missed.

Listen, I'll tell you why I'm talking about this because Jesus talked about it. He said *'the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor'*. I want you to know that the Gospel is good news for everyone, right? But Jesus here calls attention to the poor and so what we want to do is bring some solutions and in the process helps some people find their way back to God. The Gospel is not just pie in the sky by and by. It's not just about us going to heaven; it's about heaven invading earth. It's an old axiom, a rising tide floats all boats, that's what we're believing for, that's what we're committed to and we're going to need your help. We're going to need your expertise, all of us smarter than any of us. And so we need your ideas, your passion to pull this thing off but you know what together, I think we can do this.

Let me talk about who and I'll go fast. Our prototype campus will be a combination of two campuses. It will not be Barracks Row, it will not be Echo Stage, it will be a new campus with a new name. Now let me state the obvious, its three blocks from our Barracks Row campus, it is further from our Echo Stage campus, we're asking our Echo Stage campus to go the extra mile. We'll launch in June two services so you can serve one, attend one, it will take about 275 volunteers to pull it off. And so listen, we need all hands on deck and that's across all of our campuses. I want to say thank you for your investment of time, talent, and treasure.

And I just want to add one more thing; a lot of change happening up in here, right? This is a heavy lift and so I want you to know that on Saturday nights, our Saturday night service will continue to gather at the Miracle Theater out of the gate. Now, I don't know, at some point we might make that move, if that makes sense but we feel like, you know, Sunday, that's enough change right there to go around for seven days. And so Saturday night we'll continue to gather at the Miracle Theater at first.

Now I have no doubt this is Promised Land this is not a vision that we're making up. This isn't something that we're pulling out of thin air. Remember I said last week, this is not about us saying, God, we want to do this would you bless it? This is about us noticing what God is blessing and saying, let's do that. Listen, this property is a piece of promise, we should not own it but a train started coming down the tracks in 1996 and all we're doing right now is saying, God, help us steward it so that your kingdom would come so that your will would be done.

I'm going to close with this and let me invite our worship teams at all of our campuses to come. There is a powerful principle in Numbers 32:17 just gimme about three more minutes. When the

Israelites occupy the Promised Land, they had 12 tribes. Now two and a half tribes had decided that they wanted to live on the east side of the Jordan; Reuben Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, and so Moses gave them permission to do so, but only after they promise to help the other tribes occupy the Promise Land and they didn't just help they led the way. Number 32:17 they said, *"we will lead our fellow Israelites in a battle until we have brought them safely into the land."* And then he kind of adds this little exclamation point. It says, *"we will not return to our homes until all, {all until all} the people of Israel have received their portions of the land"*. I think this is a moment where it is all for one and one for all. Listen, NCC, one church with seven tribes, right; Barracks Row, Echo Stage, Lincoln Theater, Potomac Yard, Kingstown, Ballston, Gainesville. But, I want to emphasize we are one church. So we're asking everyone at all of our campuses, to add your amen to this vision. 2000 years ago, Jesus said, I will build my church. He did not say you will build my church. He did not say, I will build your church. He said, *"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."* Here's what's so exciting about it, we get to write the next chapter. I want you to know you are not here by accident, you are here by divine appointment and we are here for such a time as this. This is our moment to step in and to step up. This is our moment to add our amen to God's yes and when we do that, his kingdom is going to come. His will is going to be done on earth as it is in heaven. There is a train coming down the tracks. I can hear it, I can see it, it's going to stretch our faith. There are going to be some sacrifices that we have to make, but the best is yet to come.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that we get to be a part of this thing called National Community Church. God, this is your church, but you have called us to be a part of this church, a part of this vision. Lord, I pray that each one of us would discern the part that you want us to play. It's going to take all of us. But God, I believe that you're going to do something immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine according to your power that's at work within us. And God, we give you the glory in the church and throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.