

## The Best Tool for Every Church Planter: Vision

Vision is the most important part and the most difficult part of leadership.

### **The power of vision**

Our basic question: What have you got that's worth living for? What gets you up and energized in the morning? What's your vision for this thing we're doing? for life in general?

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. — 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 16*

Vision integrates the past, present and future. It collects the best of the past, draws upon our highest dreams and longings for the future and brings both powerfully into the present.

It is dynamic, risky and empowering.

A definition: Vision is an ideal and unique image of the future. More specifically, for our purposes, we might best define it this way: Vision is a clear; challenging picture of the future of ministry as it can and must be.

### **Good vision is:**

- Clear—everyone in the church should understand it clearly enough that they can articulate it themselves.
- Challenging—it calls people to rise to the occasion, to take the hill. One of the biggest defeaters of momentum is a vision that is too small, that requires too little commitment.
- Possible—it is attainable and a real potential, though not without hard work and sacrifice. Thus, while challenging, it has the ring of authentic possibility.
- Consists of a Mental Picture—it lodges in people's imaginations and connects with compelling images, associations, and memories when the vision is put forth.
- Relates to the Future—vision talks about what could be, even though the present reality isn't that way.
- Has a Sense of Urgency—vision says, "this has to happen!"

### **Personal vision is often uncovered more than constructed**

It is as we are doing ministry and living life that we discover our vision for how we want to do it. This is one reason why it is important to serve another's vision before trying to launch out on our own.

### **The purposes of Jesus: His Vision**

- Matthew 4:23, 9:35-37  
Matthew 10:1
- Mark 3:13-19
- Matthew 13:1-43
- Matthew 8:1-9, 28-34  
Matthew 12:28, Matthew 28:19-20
- Mark 10:45

## **Questions to Ask to Illicit Vision**

- What is the purpose of your ministry area?
- What do you want (your ministry area, your church) to be remembered for?
- Why would people want to be involved in the church your are planning (list as many different reasons as possible)?
- What does your current ministry demonstrate your sense of purpose to be?
- In whatever ministry you are currently involved, how would you define and measure success?
- In whatever ministry you are currently involved, how do you spend your time, energy, and money?
- What about the ministry you are currently doing do you feel most successful at?
- What about the ministry you are currently doing do you feel most energized by?
- What does this say about your current purpose in ministry? How does this relate to the purpose that is developing for your church plant?
- What are your assumptions?
- What assumptions do you have about your church will change in the next two to five years? Will it have the same leadership? How will you grow in terms of people, money, leaders, breadth of ministry?
- What assumptions do you have about the community you are moving to? What sort of people are there? Who will most benefit from your ministry? What are the social, political and economic realities in play?
- What are the existing ministries and churches in the community? What will your relationships to them be? How does the ministry you are planning interact with others?

## **Take some time to articulate what your values are in the following areas:**

- Giving
- People
- Facilities
- Dress (clothing)
- Leadership Style

As you think these through, do you notice any deeper themes developing? How do your values interact with the sort of people you would like to reach? Are there non-negotiable deeper values? What would you be willing to compromise on, and what wouldn't you?

## **Interacting with the Vineyard Core Values and distinctives**

Take some time to read through the core values of the Vineyard as articulated by the national board. Beneath each one, record your response, and how this interacts with your own developing philosophy of ministry.

We are a people of the Kingdom of God who...

- Partner with the Holy Spirit
- Experience and worship God
- Reconcile people with God and all creation
- Engage in compassionate ministry
- Pursue culturally relevant mission in the world

Think through some of our distinctives as a movement:

- The main and the plain
- The now and the not yet
- Come holy Spirit
- Worshipers of God and rescuers of people
- Everyone gets to play
- Come as you are, but don't stay as you are
- Naturally Supernatural
- Equipping the saints/church
- Plant churches that will plant churches'
- Leaders who walk with a limp
- Servant leadership

## **Aspects of vision for every ministry area**

Three that are true of every church

- Living encounters with God (Acts 9:1-9; 2 Cor. 5:14)
- Caring, committed community (Eph. 2:14-18)
- A powerful expression of God's heart of invitation (2 Cor. 5:11-20)

## **Evaluating what you're currently doing**

We can't go anywhere without knowing where we currently are. Never make quick assumptions. When you know where you are, you also know where you are not.

## **Areas where this is essential:**

- Beliefs – Dallas Willard: we do what we believe
- Direction – Where is the “bull's eye”?
- Costs / benefits – Jesus and the young ruler (Mark 10)
- Needed resources – What to pray, look, ask for
- Motivation – Matt. 5:20 – doing the right things for the right reasons

- God's presence / participation – Is the problem at our end?

## **Types of evaluation**

- External – outside input challenges the system
- Internal – Questionnaires, Interviews / feedback, Asking God

## **The dual task of a visionary leader**

As visionary leaders we are “binding agents” that prophetically call the body of Christ together. Vision brings people together to work on a common task, issue, problem.

We grow in our authority to do this by recognizing it isn't “our” community

*What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. — 1 Corinthians 3:5–9 (NIV)*

1. Leaving everyone / everything better than we found it

*From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. — Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)*

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. — Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)*

2. Being willing to take the loss

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. — Ephesians 4:32–5:2 (NIV)*

3. Never manipulating

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. — Ephesians 4:25 (NIV)*

*Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. — 2 Corinthians 1:12 (NIV)*

Our second visionary task is together to call the community forward toward God's future for it.

Some keys to doing this effectively are...

- Living our vision. Our personal example is our most valuable leadership / envisioning asset.
- Calling others to obedience to Christ, not to ourselves.

*He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. — Colossians 1:28–29 (NIV)*

If we recruit people to ourselves, or to a particular issue, then Jesus—the power and the presence of the resurrected Christ—is no longer the person we're following.

If we recruit people to ourselves, we are then responsible / expected to care for them. We want people to know that Jesus has invited them into this vision, and we want to let Jesus be their savior/Lord... not us.

*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 3:12–14 (NIV)*

Learning to achieve shared vision at all levels of maturity. Because the people God is allowing us to lead come to us at all different levels of spiritual and emotional maturity, we must give them room/ space to engage and continue to grow.

We are looking to build a Biblical shared vision:

As the early church was addressing the conflict of how to include the Gentile believers... in the letter they wrote after their council meeting in Jerusalem we find this phrase...

"It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28)

**Sample questions which elicit dreams and vision:**

- What gets you really upset when it's not happening in a church?"
- What's something that you always want to talk about when you talk about churches?"
- What are characteristics you've seen in a church and said, 'Someday I want to have that in my church?"
- What do you want your church/ministry to look like in 10 to 20 years?"

- What are the four to six core values of your ministry, of our church?
- Who is the ministry focus group you are targeting?
- What needs are you seeking to meet?

## **An exercise in vision**

Write out a newspaper article that describes your church 5 years from now. Include in the article the people you are reaching, how the lives of people are changing, and how you are impacting the city.

## **Essential overall characteristics of motivating vision**

- Focuses on the future. This is what lies ahead. Vision answers the question "What?" Mission statement will answer the question "Why?"  
It describes what lies ahead, what it will look like (the desired future)
- Not a dream (more specific) but also not a goal or objective (more motivational)  
Make it real enough to cause others to believe
- Is specific enough for people to "taste it" or clearly imagine it. a mental picture  
It needs to be painted/spelled out
- Is specific enough for people to know what it isn't  
What is unique about YOUR vision so people will know why it will make a difference in their lives  
Generic statements are not helpful
- Exhibits faith in God's power and mercy  
Big enough to make people stretch

## **Challenges to Vision**

- If it's too small/easy, people won't join, people won't respond, easier to get a big commitment from someone than a small commitment
- Is easily reducible to phrases and points which can be remembered.  
A few words that are compelling and motivating. (no 3 ring binders) and it's at Starbuck's sharing your vision a few thousand times, so it has to be short and potent
- Is reasonably possible, not wild-eyed dream. But not too small. Big visions motivate more than small visions.  
Not "ending war on poverty, ending all poverty in the inner city"  
but: "a ministry to touch hundreds of marriages to be healthy in the Inner city"
- Has some sense of urgency

## **Four ways to communicate your vision**

- Personal example
- Verbal slogans
- Analogy or metaphor
- Person contact