

The Importance of Vision in Leadership

By Bob Young

Elders, preachers, church leaders: Do you have a clear vision for your congregation in the next 5, 10, or 20 years? Do you have a clear vision for the future local outreach of your church? Do you have a clear vision for the mission impact of your church?

If you answered, yes; God bless you! Here is equally important question: does your congregation know what that vision is? Would the members of your church answer quickly if asked about the vision of your church?

An essential element in church leadership is vision. The vision must be clear; the vision must be shared. The vision should be result of careful analysis that generates a vision, leads to defining goals, and facilitates the development of a strategic plan of action.

The goals must be SMART -- specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-limited.

“Here is what we will do and how we will do it, here is how we will measure success, here is why we can do it, there are good reasons why we should do it, here is the timeframe.”

This specific approach avoids the tendency to intend to do something, to some extent, as best we can, that might be needed, sometime.

Ideally, the vision of a church corresponds to God’s plan for the world and to the most pressing needs that the church confronts. Such a vision will invariably include evangelism, and evangelism will invariably include the necessity of planting churches to receive new Christians. Developing a vision and casting that vision is not easy because it requires the ability (and the audacity) to anticipate in advance what God will likely do in the future. Nonetheless, the vision is essential because it is the guiding light that stirs God’s people to respond. Vision ignites and unites a congregation as it moves toward a common goal.

My doctoral research demonstrated the power of a vision to unite the church. A vision that defines common goals is THE primary factor in maintaining the cohesiveness and connectedness of any group—a leadership team, a missionary team, a church. Further, the vision inspires and motivates people to offer their best for God’s work—involvement, resources, and prayerful support.

One can hardly read the New Testament story of Paul without concluding that Paul had a vision and that his vision guided him throughout his life. Without a vision, individuals and churches turn inward and exist primarily for themselves. Without a vision, we limit ourselves. We do a “little” and seek to define it as success rather than doing the “much” that will require the full extent of our energy. Without a vision, we struggle to see our role in God’s great plan to bring everyone into Christ, to preach Christ to every creature, and to fulfill the Great Commission.

Vision identifies the goal, inspires us, provides us purpose, and challenges us.

- Leaders, churches, individuals: Do you have a vision?
- Is your vision in tune with God’s purpose?
- Is your vision worthy of God’s supreme sacrifice to bring everyone in the world to Christ?