

NOVEMBER TOOL

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LEADING WITH VISION

Leading with a clear vision is not as natural as most church leaders think. It is a professional skill that needs development to become a powerful tool for a leader. Let's spend some time learning to lead with vision. How is it being crafted, delivered, received, trained, and implemented?

Let's clear up some pitfalls and confusion about vision:

1. Common Pitfalls: no vision language, too much vision language, and changing vision language.
2. The office of church leadership requires vision. However, vision doesn't simply arrive because you hold the office.
3. Establish a clear understanding of the different parts of vision. Mission, vision, values, strategy, goals, and beliefs can often be used interchangeably which creates more confusion than clarity.
4. Know the difference between short term and long term vision. Some forms of vision can be measured to completion while other elements provide a defining direction for the future yet are never fully accomplished during your lifetime.
5. Vision must be clear, understandable, inspiring, and unify toward a specific action. Actions include everything from praying to calendar planning.
6. People long for vision, but rarely pursue it. Instead, we exchange it for placeholders like activity or convenience.
7. All staff are visionaries which requires vision training.
8. Local vision is required to engage people at the highest level of discipleship.

Let's explore some biblical texts about how vision works and doesn't work:

God calls visionary leaders for his people.

Numbers 13:1-16, 1, "The Lord spoke to Moses: 2, **“Send men to scout out the land** of Canaan I am giving to the Israelites. Send one man who is a leader among them from each of their ancestral tribes.” (CSB)

The leaders go on a journey to discover an accurate vision.

Numbers 13:17-25, 17, “When Moses sent them to scout out the land of Canaan, he told them, “Go up this way to the Negev, then go up into the hill country. **18, See what the land is like, and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. 19, Is the land they live in good or bad? Are the cities they live in encampments or fortifications? 20, Is the land fertile or unproductive? Are there trees in it or not?** Be courageous. Bring back some fruit from the land.” It was the season for the first ripe grapes.” (CSB)

The vision was detailed, local, and honest.

Numbers 13:26-29, 26, “The men went back to Moses, Aaron, and the entire Israelite community in the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They brought back a report for them and the whole community, and they showed them the fruit of the land. 27, They reported to Moses, **“We went into the land where you sent us. Indeed it is flowing with milk and honey, and here is some of its fruit. 28, However, the people living in the land are strong, and the cities are large and fortified.** We also saw the descendants of Anak there. (CSB)

The vision demanded a bold response, some provided a lesser reaction.

Numbers 13:30-33, 30, “Then Caleb quieted the people in the presence of Moses and said, **“Let’s go up now and take possession** of the land because we can certainly conquer it! 31, But the men who had gone up with him responded, **“We can’t** attack the people because they are stronger than we are!” (CSB)

The struggle of vision is real, but God’s objectives are unstoppable.

Numbers 14:1-45, 30, “I swear that none of you will enter the land I promised to settle you in, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. 31, **I will bring your children** whom you said would become plunder into the land you rejected, and **they will enjoy it.”** (CSB)

God’s vision takes time and never leaves the leaders' hearts.

Joshua 14:6-15, 10, “As you see, the Lord has kept me alive these forty-five years as he promised, since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel was journeying in the wilderness. **Here I am today, eighty-five years old. 11, I am still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. My strength for battle and for daily tasks is now as it was then. 12, Now give me this hill country the Lord promised me on that day,** because you heard then that the Anakim are there, as well

as large fortified cities. Perhaps the Lord will be with me and I will drive them out as the Lord promised.” (CSB)

Visionary leadership is handed down from one generation to the next.

*Joshua 18:1-7, 1, “The entire Israelite community assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The land had been subdued before them, 2, but seven tribes among the Israelites were left who had not divided up their inheritance. 3, So Joshua asked the Israelites, “How long will you delay going out to take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, gave you? 4, **Appoint for yourselves three men from each tribe, and I will send them out. They are to go and survey the land, write a description of it for the purpose of their inheritance, and return to me.**” (CSB)*

Vision must be localized and recorded.

*Joshua 18:8-10, 8, “As the men prepared to go, Joshua commanded them to write down a description of the land, saying, **“Go and survey the land, write a description of it,** and return to me. I will then cast lots for you here in Shiloh in the presence of the Lord.” 9, So the men left, went through the land, and described it by towns in a document of seven sections. They returned to Joshua at the camp in Shiloh. 10, Joshua cast lots for them at Shiloh in the presence of the Lord where he distributed the land to the Israelites according to their divisions.” (CSB)*

Here are some potential ministry applications for you to consider:

- (1) Put the visionary leaders in a room and commit to the process of discerning, recording, sharing, and leading with vision. This task will take time and commitment. You will learn together, leaning on each other's strengths, experiences, gifts, and passions. If not, confusion or even division may be the result.
- (2) Define the different parts of vision so there is clarity. Deciding upon a model for vision that you will follow will be helpful. Locate a resource to help serve as a guide then stick to it.
- (3) Be specific and local.
- (4) Be informational and inspiring.
- (5) State vision in a way that allows for all ministries to engage in its fulfillment.
- (6) Create goals that will drive planning no more than 12 months out. You can create new goals every year to help with future planning. These yearly goals must be in line with your long term vision trajectory.
- (7) Be honest about the obstacles, but call for a grounded faith in the God of the vision.

- (8) Allow time and questions for people to process before they commit to the vision.
- (9) Align budget, calendar, and projects with vision.
- (10) Stick to the vision language, creating a small bank of words that help support and better define the vision. However, be very mindful that the more words you use the more confusing it becomes.
- (11) Train your staff on how to lead with vision.

Tips for casting vision related to a specific project and campaign:

- (1) Campaign vision must be grounded in active church vision. The project is not the vision. It facilitates the next step of the vision.
- (2) Create a one page vision summary including the following:
 - (a) Look back providing context to the activity of God leading up to this moment.
 - (b) Clearly state the present need and opportunity.
 - (c) Why this project and why now?
 - (d) How much will it cost and how will it be funded?
 - (e) What is the timing and what will happen if we do not move forward?
 - (f) Reveal where the ministry is headed in the future beyond this project.
- (3) Locate a key scripture passage and theme for the campaign that aligns with the vision.
- (4) Discern 2-4 ministry goals that will need to be addressed and met beyond the funding need to make this vision a success.

Example Vision Speeches:

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "*I Have A Dream*" speech, Steve Job's "*2025 Stanford Commencement Address*", and Coach Brooks' Pre-Game Address from the movie "*Miracle On Ice*" are uniquely inspiring well-crafted talks. Locate these examples on Youtube to see if you can create an outline that helps you with vision crafting. Note the use of both inspirational stories alongside well-known facts paying special attention to the brevity of each speech.

- (1) Look Back at Where We Have Been
- (2) Name the Present Problem and Opportunity
- (3) Address Possible Risks and Rewards
- (4) Call for a Corporate and Personal Action Right Now
- (5) Provide a God-Sized Future Hope for All