

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

Leading: Vision 1: Why it matters and the role of the leader



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Introduction: This is the first of three sessions on the need for vision in leadership.

Opening question(s) (10 minutes)

Watch the parable of the lifesaving station on Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE1anyC_6JA

What does this say about vision?



Understanding the information (30 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

Knowing God's vision for a church or organisation is so important, but vision must be repeatedly refreshed if we are to remain faithful to our reason for existence. Most organisations are born with a tremendous amount of energy which leads to fruitfulness. However, research shows that in most organisations the time when it is most fruitful will last between three to five years and almost always be followed by a period of decline. Every organisation will come to a point where the strategies that worked previously are not proving to be as fruitful as they were under previous circumstances. Recognising this opens up the opportunity for a review of vision.



This can lead to three ways forward: reaffirming the original vision, redrawing the vision, or bringing a current vision to an end in order for something new, which can faithfully express our original purpose, to come into existence. Charles Handy argues that the best time to contemplate new thinking is while the organisation is experiencing momentum and fruitfulness. By regularly reviewing vision organisations can continue to be fruitful rather than embarking on new thinking only as a way of trying to ensure survival.

The concepts of vision, mission and values are all related. They say what the "main thing" is. They answer the question, "If someone new was visiting what would they see as your priorities?" They are about answering the question of what we called to do within a particular time frame and in our context in order to express faithfully our identity, calling, and values. Vision statements help us in many ways:

To live into the responsibilities God has entrusted to us. Even though the concept of vision is clear in the Bible (“Without vision the people perish” Proverbs 29:18) we may fear that the language of vision is influenced by management-speak and too goal-oriented. But Simon Walker argues that vision enables people to become what God has made them to be. He writes that the purpose of any goals set by a vision is not necessarily to aim to be “successful”, but to take responsibility and grow into maturity. To be changed.

They help us to be motivated in being part of something. Nehemiah’s short sermon demonstrates how fresh vision can motivate people into action and faith: “Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.” (Nehemiah 2: 17-18)

Through vision we can be freed from doing the same thing and expecting different results. We may fear being “tied down” by a particular vision, but rather than stifling fruitfulness, a good vision enables it. As Ian Parkinson writes, “Perhaps the single biggest obstacle within any organisation to forward progress is lack of clarity about the direction of travel.”

They can prevent us from being pulled in too many directions.

The reality of change and vision. No organization, perhaps particularly a church, can carry on solely doing what it has always done in the hope that society will mould itself around it. Indeed it “...is hard to think of any organisation that has sustained some measure of greatness in the absence of goals, values and missions that become deeply shared.” (Peter Senge). But the Christian story is also shaped by the idea of being on a journey and shaped by a vision. Maybe more than other people, God’s people are always on the move, looking to God’s future, and looking to see that future reality coming into the present. Not only that but vision will always exist whether we acknowledge it or not. The question isn’t whether we have a vision, but whether we are being led by God in that vision.

The role of the leader.

While the best visions will be the result of more than one person coming together to conceive them, nevertheless leadership involves some unique responsibilities in the process. It is likely to be the leader who:

Is the catalyst who takes responsibility for reminding the community of the need to review vision.

Pulls together the people who will be involved.

Names the issues that might need addressing. Like Nehemiah inspecting the broken-down walls of Jerusalem, “the first task of leadership is to define reality”, creating a sense of realism and necessity.

Helps the community do initial listening well – to God, to each other, to the context – starting by rediscovering the fundamental identity, purpose and values they hold.

Facilitates the community’s discussions, often by asking the right questions. Makes sure the vision is tested well through consultation. Not everyone will need (or want) to be consulted at the same level, so the leader will work with others to work out who should be involved and in what way.

Organises the practical process of vision being written down and finalised for a particular season.

Breathes life into the vision by starting to embody it for the community. If the vision is to be embedded, the leader will need to be able to commit to it from the start. If a leader can't give themselves to the vision, they won't be able to lead others into it. Jimmy Carter the former president of the United States desperately wanted Americans to catch the vision of providing quality housing for under-resourced people. His first response was to start to work for Habitat for Humanity, simply building houses. After months of embodying this vision, during which he had been seen on the news hammering nails into roofs, then he started to give talks about it.

Once the vision has been discerned, the leader will be key in working with others in:

Ensuring the vision is communicated well and paid regular attention to in appropriate ways. Helping the community hold its nerve through the initial stages as people's natural uncertainties and anxieties surface.

Ensuring that anything that is needing to come to a close as a result of the process is celebrated and ended well.

Making sure the vision is being put into practice through the right structures being in place and regular review.

Creating markers for different stages of the vision which will help the community notice and celebrate moving forward.

Discuss: How are you confident in leading vision? How are you not so confident?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Philippians 3: 7-14 in which Paul describes his vision

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:

What does this passage teach me about God?

What does this passage teach me about people?

How does this passage call me to obey God?

What might I do in response to this this week?

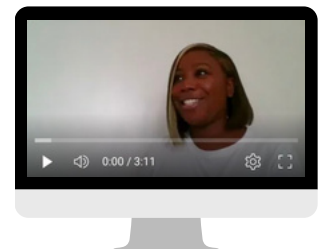


Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://youtu.be/CenUjyNKxIQ>

What struck you as important in the video?



Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

Heavenly Father, give us wisdom we pray to know what You would have us do and discernment to know what is the desire of Your heart for our lives, so that we may align our thoughts to Your thoughts and our will to Your perfect will and purpose.



Keep us we pray from following after our own, natural human wisdom or being influenced by the ways of the world but rather may we learn to base our decisions on Your will and Your purpose and be ready to follow Your guidance and direction.

Grant us a clearer vision we pray and lead us along the right path we ask, in Jesus name,

Amen

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Vision>



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