

# Way of Discipleship Small Groups

## Leading: Vision 2: How to develop vision, mission, strategy or values



### 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 second of three sessions on the need for vision in leadership.

### Opening question(s) (10 minutes)

How do you understand the difference between vision, mission, strategy or values. Why does it matter?



### Understanding the information (35 minutes)

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

There are lots of ways vision can be renewed. Some churches meet with others every few months, share ideas and stories about a key area, pray, and decide next steps for the immediate future. They then come back and review it. Alongside this they might, through a process of listening and consulting, develop vision, mission and values statements.



What are the differences between vision, mission, strategy and values statements?

Useful vision, mission or values statements will all share certain things in common.

They will help answer the question, “If someone was visiting you, what would they notice are your priorities?”

A vision statement is about future destination. It focusses on tomorrow and what a community will ultimately become and/or how it will impact the world. It summarizes why we exist as a group. For Christians it will express God’s preferred future for us. It will often begin with the phrase, “To....” Or the thought, “This is who we are becoming...”. It is a future tense statement. It will say what the “main thing” is in a compelling, simple, short, memorable and catchy way. It will be developed as we reflect on these kind of questions: What does our identity show us about why we do what we do? What are our hopes and dreams? What gaps are there between where we are now and where God would like us to be?

The mission statement accompanies the vision. While some organizations use vision and mission statements interchangeably, they offer different things, and both are needed. A mission statement is about the things we do in order to reach for the vision. It will often begin with the phrase, “By...” It is a present tense statement. A good mission statement will outline what must happen for our “job” to be done, how we will get to the vision. It will be more succinct than a strategy, only stating the main things that are done. It will be developed as we reflect on these kinds of questions: What do we do? Whom do we serve? Whom do we work with?

These vision and mission statements from well-known companies illustrate the difference:  
**Amazon Vision:** To be Earth’s most customer-centric company, where customers can find and discover anything they might want to buy online. **Mission:** By striving to offer our customers the lowest possible prices, the best available selection, and the utmost convenience.  
**Ikea Vision:** To create a better everyday life for the many people. **Mission:** By offering a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.

A final, more detailed stage is to unpack how these activities will be put into practice. This is the strategy. Depending on the size of the vision and group this could include: Who will be responsible for making sure different activities happen. What resources we will need to carry them out in terms of finance and people. How we organise ourselves in roles or teams to make this happen. How long we think this might take. What, in measurable ways, we will hope to see happen as a result. (These are particular goals which are the real things we want to see as fruit of the vision. Whereas our purpose might be to see church growth, a goal would be to see 50 in church by the end of next year instead of 40.)

Some organizations may also, having reflected on who they are and what they do, want to communicate how they do things. These are their values. They are the things they will not compromise on, or sacrifice, in order to get to the vision. While there are many possible values, a good values statement will be memorable, and might emphasise those particular ways of being that we could easily neglect or which enable everyone to flourish, for example, “Everyone is involved.”

Where do we start when developing vision? Getting the right mix of voices involved from the start. While the leader may be the catalyst in beginning the process, s/he will not have all the gifts and perspectives needed to gain a rounded sense of vision. From the start, creating a group who will take shared responsibility for the process will ensure that the best outcome can be found. Ideally, in a church context, this group would reflect the five “voices” of the picture of the church in Ephesians 4. Other ways of thinking about who could be involved in steering the process might be: Do we have a good mix of right and left brained people? In other words, is there a good balance between imaginative and data-analysing ways of thinking? Who will shape the vision? Who will refine it? Who will keep supportive watch over the community/organization in the process of change?

Once those who are going to take responsibility for the vision process are in place, the initial questions they will want to consider are: How formal or informal should this be? The larger the organisation, the more likely it is that you will need a more structured process. How long should the process take? How far ahead should we be looking? Do we have clarity on the meaning of the different terms we are using? (Vision, mission, values, strategy etc.) For churches a key question will be: How will this process be rooted in prayer and listening to God?

**Reflecting on our timeless identity and purpose.** In any organization the starting point will involve reminding people of the enduring aspects of their being in a way that looks back at our original identity, purpose and values will provide the soil in which today's vision can be planted. For churches this may mean the process starts with a journey of prayer and reflection on: The nature and mission of the church across all time. This may include teaching on foundational principles, Scripture studies and opportunities to share. The story of our particular church community in our place and our time. Why did we start? How have we changed? What have we learnt? What do we need to remain faithful to in the story God is writing in and through us?

**Listening well – to God, to others, and to our community.** This is the “inspecting the walls” part of the process. It is a fact and perspective-gathering exercise. The following suggestions are a menu of possibilities to draw from. Listening to God. Putting prayerful listening at the heart of our process will be key. Listening to others. Consulting with others who are already invested in our organization by asking “What are our current opportunities and challenges?” or “What needs fixing around us?” or “What gifts, passions or resources do you/we have?” or “What do you think we stand for?” Listening to our context. If important questions are, “Where is God already at work and how can we join in?” or “What does God want for our area?”, consulting with people in the community as part of a process will be fruitful. Group conversations, informal conversations, gathering statistics from local organisations or questionnaires might all help with this.

**How do we form vision, mission and values statements?**

If the first stage is about reminding, and the second about seeing “What is” by gathering information and perspectives, the final one is a “dreaming” stage. Asking questions such as “If resources were unlimited what would you like to see in ....years’ time?” Or “How might we live into God’s preferred future (or in whatever language works)?” or “What will have improved in...years if we are faithful to our calling?” might unlock new imagination and ideas.

For example, one activity might be to ask people to write a letter to a friend five years from now describing what has been happening in the church. These can then be shared with others.

Having enabled this “dreaming”, the organization will finally focus on what “Will be.” From all these dreams the task will be to discern, within the time frame decided on, what are feasible (but in a church context also God-dependent) future aims. As clear themes hopefully emerge the group should be able to see the future vision (where we will be and/or who we are becoming), mission (what we will do to get there) and perhaps the values (the way it will be done). If the group is small, it may be possible to draft these together. But a larger group will need to delegate the first draft to a smaller team of people with differing gifts – including good communication – which can then be brought back for testing.

The key points in the initial draft will be to ensure that: The vision is focussed on the main thing(s), is inspiring, compelling and memorable. The actions laid out in the mission are straightforward and easily understood, reflecting that it is better to a few things well. Any values speak out the way in which the vision will be put into practice and perhaps emphasise those we are likely to forget.

**Discuss:** Is your vision in need of refreshing? Where might you start?

## Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Proverbs 4: 25-27.

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)

There is no video, but you are invited to discuss your experience of sharing in developing vision.



## 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)

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord  
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son  
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one

Amen





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