



Leaders Lead

By Glenn A. Lucas

Awhile back I was talking with consultant, executive coach, and friend Kurt Bickel, about what I thought was a major problem in most churches. I said, "The problem in most churches is the lack of vision." Kurt replied, "That's not the problem. The problem is too many visions." This insight, no pun intended, made me pause and reflect on its accuracy. When I thought about it I realized how true it was. I hadn't worked with a single church where there was no vision but I had worked with churches where it seemed everyone had an idea where it should be going. Rarely did those ideas converge or provide focus. This reality led me to a second question: Why are so many congregations unfocused? My answer: leadership, or the lack thereof.

While vision may percolate up from and/or be validated by the grassroots, the primary leader in the church (i.e. the senior pastor) has the responsibility to seek the vision for the church and communicate it in a way that others can see it, embrace it, and run with it (Habakkuk 2:2). Staff, leaders, and members should be able to articulate where the church is heading and the route it is taking to "get there". Paul Borden (church consultant, pastor, and leader) says that the primary role of leaders in the church is to keep the pastor up a tree scoping out the lay of the land and directing the next steps to be taken to realize God's vision for the church. He suggests that the leaders use spears to keep the pastor up that tree. His point is well taken. Here are a few thoughts to keep in mind when it comes to vision and leadership.

1. **Follow God** - The vision is discerned and affirmed as the pastor and leaders seek after God and His desire for the congregation and His mission it fulfills. Much time needs to be spent in prayer and holy conversations. Every vision from God is going to meet the twofold purpose He has for the church to seek the lost and nurture the found. If these two are out of balance then the vision has lost its focus.
2. **Leaders Lead** - "We're going in this direction and here's why." The pastor must be bold enough to step out and give direction. The discovery and communication of the vision cannot be simply delegated to another. The congregation expects the pastor to lead.
3. **Speak First** - This third point is a continuation of the second. Many pastors undermine their authority by allowing others to cast a contrary vision before communicating their own. This passive behavior puts the pastor in conflict with other leaders and can cause the grassroots to wonder who is leading the church.
4. **Seek To Be On The Verge** - The verge is the very edge of something. It is a dynamic place where imagination kicks in, creativity is fostered, and change happens. It's not change for the sake of change but for the sake of realizing the vision. God challenges us to be on the verge of what He is doing so that He gets the glory. In Judges 7, God makes Gideon cut Israel's fighting force down to 300 men so that Israel couldn't claim the victory by their strength but instead give God the glory for the win.
5. **Trust The Grassroots** - While the pastor is the primary communicator of the vision and must seek it, God often uses the voices from the grassroots to surface key components of the vision. It is arrogant for the pastor or leaders to believe that God only communicates vision to them. The author, speaker, and leader John Maxwell's proverb, "He who thinks he leads, but has no followers, is only taking a walk" applies here. The grassroots will not

follow if they believe leaders are not listening to them. If the grassroots isn't following the leaders aren't leading.

6. **Track The Vision** - The congregation can't know where it is going or avoid traps and diversions if the pastor isn't tracking the vision and giving direction to the congregation. Tracking the vision includes setting goals and stopping along the way to celebrate milestone achievements.
7. **Communicate The Vision** - It is estimated that leaders and the grassroots lose vision focus in as little as three weeks. Therefore, it is important to keep the vision in front of the congregation. Use creative and various means to do this including preaching, Bible studies, temple talks, testimonies, onscreen blurbs, announcements tying ministries and vision together, bulletin announcements, newsletters, meetings, fellowship events, and celebrating milestone achievements.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your church's vision?
2. How is the vision communicated in your church?
3. What's the balance between seeking the lost and nurturing the found in your church?
4. How is God being glorified in your church's vision?
5. How does the grassroots get a voice in the vision of your church?
6. How is the vision tracked in your church?
7. What one thing will you do to help further the vision in your church?

Links

[Vision Leadership](#) from the Institute for Management Excellence [web page]
Provides insights on how to cast vision and re-evaluate where the vision is heading without destroying the organization.

[Vision, Leadership, and Change](#) from the Southwest Educational Development Authority [web page] Focuses on change as a part of the vision process with an emphasis on developing a shared vision.

[How To Create A Leadership Vision Driven By Intrinsic Motivation](#) by Matthew Richter [PDF]
The title gives away the direction of this resource. Richter addresses the need to connect vision to what motivates people.

Books

[Hit The Bullseye & Direct Hit](#) by Paul D. Borden
[Leadership on the Other Side: No Rules, Just Clues](#) by Bill Easum
[Building the Bridge As You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change](#) by Robert E. Quinn

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