

VISION

Vision is a leader's ability to see into the future where a group needs to go. Vision begins with a passion the Lord has placed on your heart. The leader sees into the future the ideal of what could be and then moves in that direction. All good leaders have vision. A compelling vision helps members of a group understand why they are here.

It's important to continually give your vision away to members of your group. By including others in the decision making process. Have meetings with the core people of your group to discuss new goals (i.e. growth, teachings). This helps give "ownership" of the goals to these persons as well as giving you new insights from them.

Leaders must always be aware of "vision leak." This is the tendency of the group to slowly lose sight of the vision. Leaders must communicate their vision over and over again. When you feel like a broken record player communicating your vision the members in your group then they are just beginning to "get it." The number one task of leadership is to continually clarify and communicate the purpose of the organization. Rick Warren, author of *Purpose Driven Life*, has this to say about vision,

"It's human nature to get distracted by minor issues... Without a clear purpose, you will keep changing directions, jobs, relationships, churches, or other externals – hoping each change will settle the confusion or fill the emptiness in your heart. You think, maybe this time it will be different, but it doesn't solve your real problem – a lack of focus and purpose. The bible says, 'Don't live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants.'" Ephesians 5:17 (The Message).

How do you give your vision away?

By including others in the decision making process. Have meetings with the core people of your group to discuss new goals (i.e. growth, teachings). This gives "ownership" of the goals to these persons as well as giving you new insights from them.

Regularly share your vision for the group. You will feel like a broken record at times, but people only remember 5%-10% of what they hear! To birth a vision you must repeat it over and over again (i.e. ministry model, birthing a new group, evangelism, etc.).

PLANNING

Planning is how a leader helps carry out their vision for the group. Vision and planning work hand-in-hand. Without intentionality in planning your vision will lose focus among your group members and possibly even yourself. It is vital that leaders have a healthy view of planning. Good planning results in better time management and less anxiety for the leader.

What is the truth about planning?

- Planning is scriptural and spiritual. While we always want to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading and guidance and be willing to change our agenda in favor of the Lord's, it is still quite biblical to plan.

Proverbs 16:3: "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed."

Proverbs 24:3-4: "By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures."

- Plans are GUIDELINES. We need to remain flexible and plan for things not to go as we've planned! Take driving for example. When you plan a road trip you don't point your car in the direction you want to go, lock the steering wheel in place assume you're going to make it there safely. Often you hit detours, road blocks, and heavy traffic which cause you to modify your plans. Even as you drive down the interstate you are constantly making little adjustments as you hold the steering wheel.
- It's important to have a clear sense of what success and failure really mean in the kingdom of God. Success is obedience; the results are oftentimes up to the Lord and the other people involved.
- Prayerful decision-making is important to effective leadership. As followers of Jesus, we do not need to make any of our decisions alone. We partner with the Holy Spirit in planning. It's essential to bring all of your leadership decisions to the Lord in prayer (James 1:5), as well as seeking wise counsel from pastors, leaders, and sometimes your assistants. A large part of leadership involves making decisions that help the group move forward and the members grow spiritually. Often the leader must have the final word in these decisions. A chronically indecisive leader can bring down the group.

What are the components of a successful plan?

1. Identify - Who are we as a group? Knowing who makes up your group will aid greatly in the planning process by helping you understand their needs. In the book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins and a team of researchers identify criteria for the greatest businesses of all time. This criteria identified 13 businesses who were the most fruitful and long lasting by out performed their competition for a minimum of 15 years. All of the leaders of these organizations took a "who first" approach. They looked at who they had to work with first and then determined how to move forward from there.
2. Vision & Purpose - Where are we going and why are we going there? Some good examples you might want to consider as you plan for you group are: to start a healthy home group, to build significant relationships, to draw closer to God, to develop new leaders, to multiply, to see people grounded in the Word, to see people effectively caring for their families. This is not an exhaustive list.
3. Developing a plan - how are we going to get there? Developing a plan simply involves writing out the steps it will take to accomplish your vision (sometimes referred to as goal setting).

How do I get started?

- Pray - James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
 - List specific needs of your group (i.e., new believers need Bible basics).
 - Prioritize the needs - you may not be able to meet every goal, but you can begin to narrow the list down.
 - Brainstorm with others - don't be afraid to seek others input. The Lord will often use others to bring about very wise counsel. This also teaches others to plan.
 - S-M-A-R-T Goals: John Haggai uses the word SMART to develop a good goal-setting program.
1. Specific - It's not specific enough to say, "I want to develop disciples for Jesus." Ask yourself "how" you will accomplish this.

2. Measurable - You must be able to measure your goals in order to have a successful plan. It's not enough to say, "Our group will grow." You must say "I would like to see four new members come to our group in six months." This can be measured.
3. Attainable - Set high goals, but not unattainable ones. The Holy Spirit will stretch you in this area and give you wisdom and power.
4. Realistic - To say, "I want every single person in my group to be leading a small group within three months," is not realistic. To say, "Over the next year, I would like to raise up two new leaders," is more realistic.
5. Tangible - An intangible group goal would be, "I wish my group were more organized." A tangible goal would be, "We will start and end on time."