

## Why is Vision So Important?

“A ministry community whose time is controlled by doing the business of the church tends to be spiritually unhealthy.” – Paul Tripp (Lead)

**Achievement over godliness:** In his book, “Lead” Paul Tripp opens with how achievement can become dangerous as the measure of success and a number of other problems. I will not try to reiterate his work but I encourage leaders to grab his book; very challenging. He has tackled this issue far better than I could. But there is a danger in any ministry or faith community that success is measured by how many people we get and how few glitches we have in running an events rather than changed lives. What we accomplish becomes more important than what God wants to accomplish through us; the problem is when we assume those are synonymous. With this as my “springboard” I want to take this thought and connect it to another key issue in the church – vision (or lack of vision in some cases).

**Safety over Salvation:** When a church’s primary demonstration of a faith step is primarily about managing the internal workings of the programs and ministries well, we do not have vision but stewardship. When success is only (or primarily) about making sure each program has enough to get by on and we spend less than what we budgeted it might be because of a lack of vision. If there is no vision to help us take faith steps into our community, the only thing we have to worry about is how well the program will run. The church ought to be as intentional about communicating the gospel to their community as managing the internal network of programs, events and ministries. One possible contributing problem might be a lack of vision. That might be slightly incorrect – vision, whether spoken out loud or not, might be to make things as safe and comfortable for the believers as possible. A church may feel the threat of change when others become part of the community and do everything they can to keep things the way they are now. Unfortunately that usually means keeping people out rather than bringing people in.

**Stewardship over Mission:** Adding 3% to a church budget from last year may not be as much a faith step as it is stewardship. That does not mean 3% can’t be a faith step but adjusting for rising costs to run things or inflation is stewardship not vision. I have been in situations that because a church has no vision the best “faith step” is simply flipping what was done last year and doing the same thing. There is no expectation of change, growth or fruitfulness. No desire to expand impact and no expectation to get outside the building.

**Lagging over Leadership development:** I am rediscovering this on a regular basis just because of my own context of ministry. If a church does not have a vision to keep on developing leaders *all the time* it is likely a lack of vision. A healthy church will look to develop leaders because they need people to fill the boards, committees and ministry slots. I am convinced that “leadership” ought to be looking to develop leaders from the 20 year olds, 30 year olds, the 40 and 50 year olds too. We could classify this according to cultural designations too: Boomers (1946-64); Gen X (65-76); Millennials (77-95); Gen Z (96-present) but the span is much greater. The point being that each group best knows how to empower a vision to their generation better than the one in front of it. If we are relying on the sixty year olds to think like twenty year olds to reach them... it is going to be a very tough journey.

**Hospitality over Intentionality:** One of the neat characteristics of my home church is that the people here are extraordinarily friendly to guests. The one super quality of our people is they are authentically outgoing and intentional about connecting with new people when they walk in the doors. All kinds of our people will go out of their way to greet people on Sunday morning. But what they do even better is they invest in others outside of our formal structures. They are intentional about investing in people from Monday through Saturday. Being friendly on Sunday is assumed; intentionally connecting in real life – priceless because it is fueled with vision.

**Personal Preferences over Purpose:** When believers live with vision (or purpose) then the whole church has a meaningful and eternal focus. But when there is no vision they tend to fight over personal preferences. Even Christians can become territorial, create silos and start becoming presumptuous over ministry, buildings and programs when they do not see or feel a greater reason for the church.

I am compelled to develop personal vision and a picture of how the church will impact our world.

In His grace,

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