

3 Kinds of Weak Vision That Entice Church Leaders

Warning: *This post will challenge some of your assumptions about vision in the church.*

Across the North American church landscape this year, many pastors will articulate a vision and compel people toward a preferred future that is weak. Its very nature will be lacking in biblically rugged, God-saturated, deeply compelling content. Note that I said the vision will be weak; **not bad and not wrong**. What do I mean by this comment? The three kinds of weak vision I want to clarify are lacking potency because they are more of a means to an end that we often realize. **Therefore they are missing the end-game, the bigger deal, the ultimate move.** "Means" is not the meat of vision casting. For example, if General Electric wants to "Bring Good Things to Life," they don't show you the blueprint of the dishwasher.

Now a pastor may quickly assent to the fact that that the three kinds of vision are indeed means to a greater end. **But afterwards he will practically and experientially guide his people with a lower aim.** I have seen it hundreds of times. So what are the three kinds of weak vision?

- **A building is a weak vision.** We intuitively get this. We know the building is a "tool" to accomplish the "bigger mission." Yet, in the daily grind of raising money in our capital campaigns, its easy to appeal *only to* the consumeristic impulse of the congregation. A building is a means to something.
- **Going multisite is a weak vision.** The move to multisite is the most relevant kind of weak vision today. The number of multisite churches is accelerating, and the average size of a multisite church is decreasing. It is safe to say that multisite is the new normal. And for good reasons. But ask a pastor about the vision driving the multisite, and you might be surprised how little they have to say. Multisite is a means to something.
- **More people in worship is a weak vision.** The third one is connected to the first two. Indeed you may think it is the substance of the first two. We are building a building *to what end?* **More people of course!** We are going multi-site *to what end?* **More people of course.** Now don't get me wrong. I think every church should be reaching more people and multiplying disciples. And more people, more building and more campuses are all important features of the vision. **But by themselves they are weak.** More people is a means to something.

Allow me to illustrate a strong vision with my home church, Clear Creek Community Church in Houston. Our vision is what I call a "gospel saturation" vision. We have adopted a 500,000 population area that we refer to as the "4B" area. (From the beltway to the beach; from Brazoria county to the bay.) One of two people in this area are "nones;" that is they have no faith affiliation whatsoever. **In the next 15 years, our vision is for each of the these 500,000 people to be one degree away, relationally speaking, from an invitation into a gospel-centered, missional community.** With this summarized substance of the vision, we can now see how **buildings, multisite campuses and more people are means to a full picture, high-definition vision.** We see the need for ten campuses and know that three campuses will

anchor the ten with more significant buildings. **But those pieces aren't the purpose themselves.** Why is it critical important to show buildings, multi-site and more people as means and not ends?

- First, focusing on means **unintentionally amplifies the self-promoting motives of church leadership.** An ends-based vision, in contrast, connects the idea of “bigger” to the broader redemptive motives of God.
- Second, highlighting the means **only incurs emotional connection indirectly** through the personal contact to and relationship with a church leader. In other words, I don't get excited about a mean-based vision unless I am friends with the pastor who is casting it. Ends-based vision, on the other hand, **accelerates emotional connection directly with the picture of the future**, not the person talking about it.
- Third, means-based vision is **ultimately a church-centric idea.** Therefore people let the “pastor and staff” be the owners of it. Ends-based vision, however, **distributes the accomplishment of the vision to each one, every day in the congregation.** The real vision must be a life-centric idea, not a church-centric one.

I know all this talk of “means” and “ends” sounds a little nerdy. (The engineer in me!) But I hope it connects you back to the simple leadership model of Jesus.

Want to read more about strong vision: Check out [“The Church List for the Rest of Us.”](#) It's called the Unique 19 and it is 19 amazing stories of vision that are not based on church size.

Read more from Will [here](#).