

6 Ways to Rekindle Your Church's Passion for Its Vision

The vision is still in print, but it's harder to keep people's eyes on it. Vision lingo is still spoken, but it's harder to get people excited about it. Vision activity is still performed, but it's harder to remember the reason for it.

Diagnosis: your church has lost its passion for its vision. We get it. It happens to everyone. Waning passion is part of life, but it doesn't have to be permanent. Here are six ways to get it back.

#1 – REINTRODUCE people to the problem

Every genuine vision solves a problem. It describes a place we want to go that's better than where we are. This is especially true for vision in the church. If a church's vision comes from God, it is one detail of God's total vision for the world. God's vision solves the biggest problem there is: the "futility" and "bondage" in the world due to sin (Rom. 8:20-21).

So when you roll out a new vision to the church, you have to "problem-cast before you vision-cast." In other words, you have to help people get emotionally tied to the problem that the vision exists to solve. Otherwise, they won't care much about the solution. If passion wanes as time goes on, people may have lost touch with the problem. It may not be a burning issue for them anymore.

To rekindle the passion, use both platform and private conversation to rub people's faces in the specific problem your church was commissioned by God to address. Remind people of what it looks, feels, and smells like. Recover holy discontent with the world as it is. Awaken people's thirst for the solution —what God wants to do through his church.

#2 – REVISIT Scriptures about encouragement and discouragement

People need to be reminded of the problem if they have become complacent and self-satisfied or if they have become distracted by lesser things. But those aren't the only reasons passion fades.

Sometimes passion fades because of discouragement. People may know well the problem that vision is meant to solve. In fact, they know it so well that it's overwhelming. They may have been struggling against it for a while, and for some reason they don't seem to be gaining any ground. They're demoralized.

Fortunately, the Bible contains rich resources for discouraged people. Dig up the jewels of the complaints of God's people —

"How long, LORD ? Will you hide forever?" (Ps.89:46). Preach them. Better yet, pray them in small and large groups.

Then mine the ore of encouragement out of Scripture. Remind each other to “be strong and courageous. . . do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9). Recall the reality of the presence of God in your midst. Remember that he is infinitely more invested in the vision than even you are, and he will bring it to completion.

#3—RESEARCH individuals who are passionate for the vision

Maybe passion has waned in the church in general, but that doesn’t mean everyone in the church has lost it. Who is still fired up?

It may be a staff person, but it’s even better if it’s someone else. Great places to look include new volunteers and new members. These people have stepped up their involvement because they care—something about the church has touched them emotionally.

So once you locate the who, learn the why. What do these passionate people love about the church? If they’ve been at it for a while, what do they do that keeps their passion strong? Search for stories, themes, and lessons that can be transferred to the rest of the body.

#4—REMIND with an annual report experience

Does your church issue an annual report every year? A well-done report reminds people of where the church is headed and celebrates milestones along the way.

If you already prepare an annual report, does it stir the soul? Is it printed in black and white or in vivid color? Does it list numbers or does it tell stories? (The right answer: both.) Does page area display as much imagery as text? Is the church’s vision woven into its language, and does it define its outline?

To get the most out of the report, make its release an experience. Connect it with a worship weekend that’s hyped for two weeks prior. Shoot and show video that enlivens the high points. Preach a passionate sermon that illuminates the biblical source of the vision.

#5—REFRESH with your leadership development strategy

According to Auxano Lead Navigator Mac Lake, an effective leadership development strategy has three elements. All of them can inject passion back into the church.

Prepare new leaders in the competencies they need for their new roles. Whatever the role, make one of its core competencies a passion-sustaining practice such as “giving encouragement that shapes the soul. ”

Equip current leaders by huddling up on a regular basis to learn from each other on a leadership topic. One huddle could reorient leaders to the vision. Another could be about how to keep passion alive.

Finally, inspire leaders every six to twelve months with a leadership conference, either in house

or as a field trip. Soak the experience in vision conversation.

#6—RENEW the passion of senior leaders

If passion has waned in the church, it's time to check the senior leaders' pulses. People are rarely more passionate than those who lead them.

If honest self-examination and frank conversation reveals that your team isn't "feeling it" the way you used to, talk about why. Is the problem at church? At home? In your body? In your spirit?

Maybe it's time for a staff retreat that's less about planning and more about dreaming. Maybe you need to install a rotating series of sabbaticals to keep leaders refreshed.

Or maybe you lack passion for the church's vision because you're out of touch with your own vision. Personal calling feeds collective calling. Is it time for your team to get clear on your individual vision journeys?