

A Vision is a Dream That Can Be Implemented

It's been said many times by many different people that everything rises or falls on leadership. I don't think that's ever truer than in ministry. Charles McKay, a former professor at California Baptist College, used to tell us if you want to know the temperature of your church, put the thermometer in your mouth. That's a good statement. You can't ever take people farther than you are yourself, spiritually or any other way.

I remember when I was interviewed on the Acts television network by Jimmy Allen, and he asked me about starting new churches. He said, "How important is location?" I said it's very important, the second most important thing. But the most important thing is not location, but leadership in a church. I see churches in great locations that aren't doing anything and I see churches with good leadership in poor locations doing great things.

Leadership is the key.

You don't have to be a charismatic leader (in the emotional sense) to be a great leader. Some of the greatest charismatic leaders of this century were also the worst — Stalin, Mao, Hitler. They were all very charismatic people, so personality has nothing to do with dynamic leadership.

Leadership and vision

It's not the charisma of the leader that matters; but the vision of the leader. Whatever your assignment may be in your church, no matter what your ministry concentration may be, your number one responsibility of leadership in that area is to continually clarify and communicate the vision of that particular ministry. You must constantly answer the question: Why are we here? If you don't know the answer, you can't lead.

As a senior pastor, my job is to keep us on track with the original New Testament purpose of the church. That gets much more difficult as the church grows larger and larger. When we were very small, the only people who wanted to come were non-Christians. We didn't have a lot of programs. We didn't have a children's ministry or a music ministry or a youth ministry. The people who wanted all those things went to churches that had them. Now I meet people coming over from other churches every week. This new dynamic presents an acute problem. Every one of these people carries in a load of cultural baggage. They expect Saddleback to be like the church they left. The first words off their lips can be, "At our old church, we did it like this..."

How can I politely say, "We don't care how you did it at some other church."? I don't mean to be rude, but the vision of the church someone just left isn't the key issue. Our vision in this church is the key issue. Therefore, I must continually clarify and communicate Saddleback's vision to everyone who walks through our doors. I must make clear what we are doing and why we are doing it. No one can be left in the dark to the question of vision. At Saddleback, we constantly communicate our vision through the membership class, through social media, and in any way we possibly can. Our purpose for being is always out front where everyone can see it. Everyone needs to know why we are here and catch our vision.

Leader or manager

Vision is the main difference between leadership and management. Management consists primarily of three things: analysis, problem solving, and planning. If you go to any management course they'll be composed of those three things. But leadership consists of vision and values and the communication of those things. If you don't clarify the purposes as the leader, who's going to?

Most churches are over-managed and under-led. Your church needs to be managed, but it also needs to be led. You have to have both. When you only have management in the church, you get the problem of paralysis of analysis. It's like "Ready... Aim ... Aim ... Aim ..." And they never fire. Management without leadership results in constantly analyzing and looking, but never actually doing anything. Don't get me wrong. You need managers within the church as well. Without them you end up with a church that says, "Ready.... Fire!" without ever taking the time to aim. You need both.

The power of vision

Some people have dreams, but not vision. There is a difference. A vision is a pragmatic dream. Lots of people have great dreams. They have grand ideas of all they would like to accomplish, but they can never get their dreams in a concrete form where they can do something about it. A vision is a dream that can be implemented. It's specific. Nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific.

Every Easter Sunday I stand back and marvel at all God has done in our church. We started on an Easter with a handful of people. Now, every Easter we have even more than the year before as thousands upon thousands gather together. That's incredible to me when I think how it all just started with a little vision. And from that we've watched a movement happen. **That's the power of a vision.**

> [Read more from Rick.](#)

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