

Are You Leading Your Church or Just Managing It? Learn the Difference.

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 say, *"If you want to know the temperature of your church, put the thermometer in your mouth."*

You can't ever take people further than you are yourself, spiritually or any other way.

I remember when I was interviewed on the ACTS television network by former SBC president, Jimmy Allen, and he asked me about starting new churches. He said, "How important is location?" I told him that location is the *second* most important thing. But the most important thing is not location, but *leadership* in a church.

You don't have to be a charismatic leader (in the emotional sense) to be a great leader. Personality has almost nothing to do with dynamic leadership.

Vision Matters

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 focused on the five purposes Jesus gave the church in the New Testament. That gets much more difficult as your church grows 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 that we're big enough to not only have these programs but to excel at them, we have people transferring their membership to Saddleback.

Every week I meet people coming from other churches. This dynamic presents an acute problem. Often, people coming from another church carry cultural baggage and the expectation that Saddleback will be like the church they left. But the vision of the church someone just left isn't the key issue. What matters is the vision you have as the spiritual leader of your congregation.

You must continually clarify and communicate your church's vision to everyone who walks

through the doors. You must make clear what you are doing and why you are doing it. No one can be left in the dark to the question of vision.

At Saddleback, we constantly communicate our vision through Class 101, through our website and social media, and in any other 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.

Vision Is the Difference Between Management and Leadership

Management consists primarily of three things: analysis, problem solving, and planning. If you go to any management course, it will be composed of those three things. But leadership consists of vision and values and the communication of those things. If you don't clarify God's purposes as the leader, who is going to do so?

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. Management without leadership results in constantly analyzing and looking, but never actually doing anything. You need managers within the church as well. Without them you end up with a church that makes decisions without direction.

Vision Is Powerful

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.

When you look out on a congregation filled with people who have been reached with the Good News of Jesus, whose lives have been eternally changed by God's power, you get to witness the power of the vision God has placed in the heart of a church leader.

If you're not sure where God wants you to be taking your congregation, get alone and spend time with him until he makes it clear.

> [Read more from Rick.](#)

[Connect with an Auxano Navigator to learn the difference between managing and leading your church with vision.](#)