

## Six Strategies to Communicate Vision to Your Church

Your most important job as a church leader isn't to hire and fire. It isn't to manage a budget. It isn't to mentor younger leaders. It's not even to preach.

All of those tasks are important. They're part of what you do as a church leader.

But your main job as a leader is to remind your congregation continually of your church's vision. Everything else you can delegate. You can't delegate vision.

Proverbs says, "Without a vision, the people perish." You have a lot riding on the vision you communicate to your church.

Communicating vision gets harder and harder—and much more important—as your church grows. I saw this firsthand at Saddleback. If you've heard the story of Saddleback, you know I shared a vision for the future of the church during our trial run, a week before our official launch.

At first, it was relatively easy to keep the church focused on the vision. When we were small, the only people who came were non-Christians. They had zero expectations about what church should be like. All they knew was Saddleback. We didn't have a children's ministry, a youth ministry, or a music ministry. The people who wanted all of those programs went somewhere else. Those who came to Saddleback largely followed the vision we set in that initial service.

But the larger we grew, the more people came from other churches. Growth alone doesn't solve a church's problems. It just changes them. All of those people brought their baggage with them from their old churches. I started hearing on a regular basis, "We did it like this at my old church."

At that point, I had to become very intentional about how I communicated the vision.

Yes, you should do a vision message (or even better, a series of messages) once a year. But that shouldn't be all your church hears about your church's vision. If I had only communicated the church's vision annually, we'd be a different church today. Churches need more than just a once-a-year infusion of vision. They need constant reminders about what the church is all about.

When you don't regularly refocus your church around a shared vision, you'll slowly find your church experiencing *vision drift*. You may have, at one time, shared a compelling vision with your congregation that everyone rallied around. But as other people came on board, your church incorporated other elements into the original vision. It doesn't take long before the vision becomes unrecognizable from the original.

That's why your number one job as a leader is to communicate the vision of your ministry. Whether you're the senior leader who must communicate your vision to the entire church or a leader of a specific ministry who must regularly keep that ministry's vision in front of the people,

vision-casting is your most important responsibility.

Because organizations, churches included, naturally experience vision drift, the best leaders aren't necessarily the most charismatic. The best leaders are the ones who keep organizations moving forward together toward the mission.

Over the past 38 years at Saddleback, I've leaned on some specific methods to keep the vision in front of our church family. Here are six of the most important.

## 1. Scripture

Your church needs to realize that its vision doesn't come from your whims. It's centered on what the Bible teaches about the church. Every part of your church's vision needs to be supported by Scriptures that explain and illustrate your reason for doing it. Let people see how blessed they are to have the church, the body of Christ. Help your members to develop a high respect for the family of God—and his purposes for the church.

## 2. Application Steps

Part of reminding your congregation about the church's vision is to continually put before them the activities that will help the church achieve the vision. If part of your vision is to help people build meaningful relationships in your church, remind your people of the vision as you encourage them to get involved in small groups. If part of your vision is to be involved in local and global missions, regularly communicate opportunities for them to participate in missions.

## 3. Symbols

Some say 65 percent of people are visual learners. It could even be higher than that. Regardless, people need visual representations of your vision to help them grasp it. Symbols can paint powerful pictures that words alone can't do.

At Saddleback, we've used a diamond shape and a series of concentric circles to describe the church's vision and purposes. I've seen other churches use racetracks, mountains, rivers, and soccer fields. Each of these communicated the vision of the church within a specific context of ministry.

## 4. Slogans

People will remember slogans long after they've forgotten your sermons. Many key events in history have hinged on a slogan: *Remember the Alamo! Sink the Bismarck! I shall return! Give me liberty or give me death!* History proves that a simple slogan, repeatedly shared with conviction, can motivate people to do things they would normally never do—even to give up their lives on a battlefield.

We've used dozens of slogans at Saddleback to help communicate the church's vision (such

as “every member is a minister” and “all leaders are learners”). Take some time to go through your vision with an eye for easy-to-communicate slogans that describe parts of your vision.

## 5. Stories

Jesus frequently used stories to help people relate to his vision. Stories help people personalize and dramatize your vision. I try to regularly include testimonies (delivered in person and through letters) from people who are regularly living out the vision and purposes of the church. Those illustrations help people at our church understand what it looks like to demonstrate Saddleback’s vision. It also makes heroes out of the people who do the work of the church. *People tend to do whatever is rewarded.* Brag on your church’s heroes. Tell their stories.

## 6. Specifics

Provide concrete actions that explain how you’ll achieve your vision. Plan programs around it. Hire staff around it. Remember that nothing becomes *dynamic* until it becomes specific. When a vision is vague, it holds no attraction. The more specific your church’s vision is, the more it will grab attention and attract commitment.

Vision drift is natural. Do nothing and your church will drift from the vision, no matter how compelling it is. If you don’t *purposefully* and *consistently* refocus your church around a singular vision, your church will become something quite different.

Lean on these six strategies to communicate your church’s vision to the congregation. Be creative. Add to these ideas. Do whatever it takes to focus your people around a shared biblical vision. That’s what true leadership is all about.

> [Read more from Rick.](#)

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