

The Vision Vacuum

In my nine years of parenting, I've attended some really bad kid's birthday parties. In my years in ministry, I've also participated (and lead) awkward small groups. I've been on volunteer ministry teams that didn't accomplish much. And I've held jobs where I spent more time frustrated than fulfilled. The experiences were painful in different ways, but they had one thing in common: they all lacked vision.

For example, let's consider the bad birthday party. During one of those experiences, I observed the group dynamics of a gaggle of preschoolers. Although there were clearly fun things available, there wasn't any sense of direction. No one led the kids into a plan. No one helped them experience the fun together. Some kids clumped together in packs and began fighting. Some wandered aimlessly, loners outside of the group. And none of them really had much fun at all. The party didn't lack the essential elements of a good time--it just lacked vision.

The party debacle reminded me of Matthew 9:36, when Jesus had compassion on the people because they were "harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd." Yep, I just applied that to a preschool birthday party, a vision-less, shepherd-less experience for everyone. And that same concept applies to your work today.

Most churches and organizations have overarching vision statements, but as leaders, we can underestimate the need for vision in *everything* we shepherd. Perhaps you can tell me about your big vision in your church or company, but **can you tell me about your vision for today's staff meeting?** Maybe you have a sense of what your manager or senior pastor believes is the vision of your team, but can you tell me about your vision for the event you are holding next month?

What that bad kid's birthday party reinforced in me is that **my primary role as a leader is to spark and maintain vision.** Here's a few ways you can apply that today:

1. The Hook: Start off meetings or emails with a personal story. Use the story to hook back into the vision of your program. Most people are motivated when they know their work makes a difference, but you are responsible for communicating these connections. This can help us all keep the "main thing the main thing."

2. Rigorous Pruning: As a leader, we must ask ourselves the hard questions. Does what we are doing actually accomplish the vision? Even if no one is talking about it, they are certainly thinking about it. Lead with courage, and prune projects and programs that aren't accomplishing the vision.

3. Careful Tending: In order to lead with vision, I must carefully tend my own soul. The more vision-casting that's required of me, the more solitude and prayer I require. Being the vision-holder is a tiresome job, no matter how much you believe in what you are doing.

4. Repeat with Diligence: Although your vision may be very clear and present to you, it's never

as clear or present in your team. Never assume that your team knows what you are after without a reminder. Spark the vision. Maintain the vision. Repeat.

Not only do we need vision for the work we do, we need vision for the life we live. In ministry, we all have the temptation of becoming reactive. I asked a co-worker recently about his workload, and he admitted he can lose a day (or more!) each week merely answering email.

We need personal vision. What is the most important thing you do? How do you prioritize? When should you say *no* in order to say yes to the most critical needs of your soul? If you are operating in a personal vision vacuum, today might be a day to spend some time refreshing yourself on what matters most to God, and what he's gifted you to do. Tend your soul, tend to your team, and remember...even your kid's birthday party needs vision.

Read more from Nicole [here](#).