

## Episode 013

# Developing An Inspirational Vision

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## Why Leaders Need Vision

In my earlier podcast “The Inspirational Leader’s Vision”, I stated that a leader without vision is a leader without an aim, a ship without a rudder, a missile without a target. When we do not really know where we want to go, there is less motivation and determination to get move on. Further, there is little inspiration for others to follow.

In fact, the lack of vision is dangerous.

### **Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)**

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

It is also a sad state of being. Helen Keller, a famous blind and deaf social activist had this to say, “The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight but has no vision.” How much more a spiritual leader?

So how can we develop a God-given vision? How does a spiritual leader envision the future?

## How Inspirational Vision Develops

### **It is seeded by Holy Discontent**

Bill Hybels coined the phrase “Holy Discontent” by which he meant that something of God stirs in our heart making us dissatisfied with the status quo. God gives us a discernment of issues, the problems. He helps us see why it is a problem and why it must be addressed.



Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1 saw the problem of Jerusalem without the proper protection of its walls. Nehemiah probably saw the problem on a range of fronts. It was a security problem as the returned exiles were continually compromised by outside intrusions etc. It was an honour problem because God's Name was dishonoured through the impoverished state of the Israelites. As if God was not capable of protecting His people. It is a spiritual problem as it exposed the spiritual passivity amongst the people. Nehemiah saw nothing being done to deal with it. God stirred a holy discontent with the situation. Nehemiah was so dissatisfied that he volunteered himself to deal with the issues.

There are many who can be at that similar point. If they just remain there, they may become complainers and whingers. Thorns on many leaders' sides. But those who reach the other side, reach the God-inspired possibility. They are the ones with the holy aspirations. They are the ones that gain a holy vision. Inspirational vision occurs when holy discontent moves one to holy aspirations.

### **It is centred by aligning with God's vision**

It is not enough that a leader has vision, a personal vision. Alignment is critical if we are to move with God and with one another. When a leader's vision is properly aligned, it leads to greater synergies and greater outcomes.

God should be first and foremost in the vision process. We need to come to grips with who He is. We need to become familiar with His being, His heartbeat, His perspective, and His will from His Word. We cannot truly know God's vision unless we first know God. How do we achieve this?

#### a. By studying the Word of God.

The Word helps us to better understand God and His heartbeat. The Word should be so much a part of our lives that we begin to think like God would. The Word gives us the blueprint and manual for our Christian living. It is the Word that gives us the overall context of a God-given vision.



God's vision is encapsulated in the Great Commission. His vision has always been to fill this earth with a people that will bear His image (Gen 1:26-28). However, since the Fall of man, His plan of redemption involves the preaching of the Gospel and making disciples of every nation in order that men might follow Him fully again.

Our personal vision should be part of God's greater vision of the Great Commission. In fact, our vision should be the Great Commission, although our role may be a part of it. For no one church, no one ministry, no one leader can encompass all that God desires. Just as God gives each believer spiritual gifts and calls each to different aspects of ministry, the same applies to each local church. God works consistently. Unique allocation for individual, for local church, for family of churches, etc.

Consider that as every cell in our body has the DNA that contains the entire vision of what our body is and how it functions. Yet each cell has its own special role within the body. Hence, while it functions in its appointed role, it always retains the overall vision of the function of the body. Similarly, every Christian will have their role in God's plans and have a personal vision about their role. Nevertheless, every Christian must have the overall vision of God as expressed by the Great Commission. Only then can we be fully biblical in our vision.

This grand vision gives us the scope, the main thrusts. We must keep within the scope and keep to the main thrusts. It is so important that we major on the major and minor on the minor. Problems occur when ministries or churches focus on the minor and neglect the major. For example, a church that prioritises prayer or worship but neglects soul winning and disciple-making. It is missing the main point.

b. Hearing God through prayer.

While the Word gives us the general will of God, it is important to seek God personally to better grasp God's will for us personally. Seek God diligently and as part of knowing Him more intimately, He will lead us more specifically into His vision.

**Psalm 37:23 (NKJV)**

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.



We must listen to Him until God's vision captures our hearts. As part of that, we should fast and pray. That was how Paul and Barnabas heard God's missionary call. (Acts 13:2 NIV) While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." God also often use others to impart His vision for us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **It complements by aligning with the House's Vision**

God rarely give us a vision outside of and independent of the House He called us to. When there is a lack of fit, it usually means the House did not align properly or we did not align properly. For God does not divide His House. Nehemiah could build the walls of Jerusalem with those who agreed with the vision God gave him. Those who rejected Nehemiah's vision were those opposed to God's vision.

In the same way, we can contend together as one man (Phil 1:27) for the House when our vision aligns. So, consider how our vision incorporates the local church vision. Consider how our vision can also enhance and contribute towards the enlargement of the church vision. It may bring a new nuance, a new angle, a new parallel that adds to. It strengthens the existing vision with new areas. It enables the existing vision to broaden.

For example, the church I lead, Hope Church, is called to be an Antioch church. A Great Commission church. A church that disciples equips and sends forth. We are not called to be a prayer centre, a healing centre nor a worship centre. Though we must build strong pillars of prayer, of healing, of worship. There may be other churches in our family of churches that could be one of those. But that is not God's call for Hope Church. Leaders who align with that vision will complement what we do. We always welcome those whose vision can add to our vision. For example, one of our pastors felt called of God to Africa to raise up church planters and multiply churches there. After seeking the Lord, we felt God's leading and proceeded to expand our missions work into Africa although we had originally sought to focus only on the Pacific islands. This expansion of vision was in line with God's call as a Great Commission church.



### It matures through incubation of the vision

There is often an irresistible impulse to run with the vision immediately, to rush into it. However, it is important to incubate the vision to allow it time to germinate as we pray, fasting, meditate and ponder over it.

This allows it to be clarified and becomes clear in our minds and heart. It will also cement the convictions in our hearts and help us to think through related issues so that when we do launch forth, we are better prepared for the challenges involved. We need to reach a point where we can see it, say it and then seize it. We need a journey of incubation. A season of time where a birthing occurs in our spirit and soul. In that time, 3 key things must occur.

#### a. Courageous dreaming.

We cannot complete this journey without courageously dreaming with God. Dreams are part of the language that God uses with us. God deals with pictures and burdens.

It takes courage because it is humanly impossible. It takes God to fulfil a God-sized vision. It takes courage to believe God for it. It takes courage because it requires a God-sized sacrifice. It takes courage because we may not be truly sure of the outcome. Yet we must be willing to believe for it. William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions said, "expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."

Mark Porter had this illustration. "I like to think of a goal as a target. The bull's eye is 100. Concentric rings are 80, 60, 40, and 20. I aim for 100, but sometimes I hit 80 or even 20. But if I don't aim for 100, I will hit zero every time. Someone said, "I would rather attempt to do something great for God and fail, than to do nothing and succeed."

After Eisenhower won the Republican nomination for President from Robert Taft in 1952, a reporter asked Taft about his goals. He said, "My great goal was to become President of the United States in 1953." The reporter smirked. "Well, you didn't make it, did you?" He said, "No, but I became senator for Ohio!"



God wants us to believe Him for great things. God wants us to trust Him enough to know He will do it with us.

### Hebrews 11:1 NIV

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

When the leader has faith, followers will have faith. When leaders have courage, the people will learn to be courageous. In Nehemiah 4:10 the Israelites were overwhelmed by the opposition and the challenges. Yet Nehemiah rose up with courage and rallied the people in Nehemiah 4:14. What changed? The people and external circumstances were the same. What changed was leadership.

#### b. Creative problem-solving

What stands between the dream and reality? A mountain of challenges! What is needed to address and overcome the challenges are solutions. As leaders, we have to solve problems! And we need creativity to solve it effectively. It is not enough for a leader to say we want to go to the moon. They have to identify the strategy at the very least. Even better, if they can work out the plan.

Nehemiah had the strategy and the plan. His strategy was to use the King's resources to fund the rebuilding of the wall. His plan was to rally the people and get as many involved in rebuilding it as possible. For every problem that he was confronted with, he found a practical solution. Many of his solutions revealed creativity and innovation. Imagine getting the returnees to rebuild the wall section nearest to their homes. Getting priests and nobles to help rebuild the wall was almost unheard of. When under pressure from external persecution, building with one hand and carrying arms with another.

Will we simply be dreamers or practical visionaries? Practical visionaries solve the challenges and problems, they do not just dream of reaching their goal.



c. Cementing the convictions

Dreams often petered out because the convictions are not deep enough to withstand the pressures. True visionaries cement their convictions so that they will last the distance. Nehemiah's convictions were solid enough for him to face every challenge and overcome.

The incubation period is when we need to deepen our convictions to the point that we know that we know that we know how important something is. Especially before God. As to why we have to do it. The incubation period is an important period of seeking God, clarifying with God.

I rarely waste time and energy second-guessing my significant choices. This is because for anything big, I make sure of my depth of conviction first before I launch out.

## Conclusion

How can a leader develop an inspirational vision? It usually starts with holy discontent and reaches holy aspirations. One starts by God-inspired discernment of a problem and reaching a God-inspired solution. It is equally important that it aligns with God's vision and the vision God has given the House you are part of. The journey requires an incubation period of courageous dreaming, creative problem-solving and the cementing of convictions.

The road to an inspirational vision is not easy but is a crucial key to becoming an inspirational leader.



## Discussion Questions

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These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. Is it possible that within you is stirring some holy discontent? Are you able to identify it? Are you stuck in the discontent or have you moved into holy aspirations?
2. If you have holy aspirations, how certain are you that it is aligned with God's vision? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think that aligning your aspirations with the church vision you are in is important? Or why not?

## Actionable Steps

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Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. If you are still at the discontent point, are there some specific steps you can take to move towards holy aspirations?
2. What specific steps can you take to ensure your vision aligns with God's?
3. If you need to incubate your vision, what specific steps do you need to take to adequately incubate it?







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