

Episode 012

The Inspirational Leader's Vision

Importance of Vision

A leader without vision is a leader without an aim, a ship without a rudder, a missile without a target. Without vision, the leader will be dead in the water. Stuck. With no energy, no incentive to push on against great obstacles. Without a personal vision, we are not clear on where we are headed. Because we do not really know where we want to go, there is little motivation and determination to get move on. There is little inspiration for others to follow you.

Leaders could borrow the vision of others for a while. But sooner or later, it will not be enough. You need to own your vision. Even if the vision is that of the larger group, the vision of the group has to become your own.

Great leaders have great vision. If you are to be a leader of significance, the question is how significant is your vision? My vision is that Hope International Ministries, the church-planting movement I currently lead, will have a global impact transforming lives everywhere through soul winning, making disciples and planting churches. That one day we will exceed 100,000 Christ-centred disciples.

What Does a Godly Inspirational Vision Look Like?

It is a clear mental image of a preferred future, inspired by God. It is a clear mental image, of how things should be in the future. It is not fuzzy. It is a preferred future, a desirable future. It is seeded by God into our hearts.



Vision concentrates on the future. It is not about having more of the past or maintaining the status quo. It is about creating a better tomorrow in which the purposes of God are brought to pass, through God's empowerment and guidance. When we see the vision the Israelites had of the Promised Land, it contained all the above ingredients.

Leviticus 20:24 (NIV84)

But I said to you, "You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.

Some key components of an inspiring vision.

Compelling

A godly and compelling vision imagines a noble and desirable future. It promotes a worthy goal that inspires sacrificial investments. It draws strong interest, admiration and evokes conviction. One that is faith-inspiring and aligns with God's purposes.

Nehemiah 2:17-18 (NIV)

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." 18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

A compelling vision lifts, inspires, motivates people into action. The more compelling the vision, the greater the willingness to pay the cost.

Credible

Besides being compelling, it must be credible. In other words, can your hearers seriously believe it is attainable? Can you present a viable strategy? Adequate resource it? Can you show that God is behind you? That is has God's fingerprints all over it?

Nehemiah shared with the Jews in Jerusalem how he miraculously received the king's approval for the rebuilding project. It proved God's intervention. That gives credibility!



Courageous

Genesis 12:1,4 (NIV)

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ...4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

Vision must appeal to the nobler side of us. It cannot be ordinary or mundane. It must inspire faith. It demands courage. It will inspire its hearers to do great exploits. That together, we can achieve something greater.

Communicable

An inspiring vision is one that is easily communicated to others, easily understood for people to catch and follow. It is best communicated in graphic language, in picture forms. It is coherent, memorable and easily repeated.

The Power of Vision

Vision has tremendous power to impact the leader and his followers.

Vision motivates

Acts 20:24 (NIV)

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Paul's Damascus road experience of the resurrected Christ and the command to preach the Gospel to Gentiles everywhere became the motivating vision in his life. The vision stirred in him a tremendous impetus to finish and complete the task that God gave him. He was willing to forsake all things in order that he might fulfil the goal set before him.



Vision provides a powerful intrinsic motivation to the leader. That is why a leader must have vision. If we lead a church, group or ministry, we must have a vision for where we want it to go.

Church leaders must have a vision for their church. A vision to see the members grow to be strong biblical people from which church planters will come forth one day. A vision to see the church grow and multiply, extending the kingdom of God. A vision to see lives being touched, healed and made whole by the power of God. Such godly vision will motivate the leader to invest his life to bring the vision to pass. It will also motivate the leader to impart this vision to others.

The vision to see this world filled with Christ-centred believers and vibrant biblical churches has captured my heart. For I am tired of seeing weak ineffective Christians and weak ineffective churches who are being trampled underfoot by the Enemy. I desire to see the glorious and victorious Church that the Scriptures speak of and which I know will be fulfilled one day. I want to be part of that kind of church.

I long to see churches that will truly be salt and light in their communities because they live out the Word in their daily lives. Churches that will bring in the lost, the wounded and make them whole in God. Churches that will not be inward-looking but Great Commission minded. Sending churches that will send missionaries and plant churches all over the world.

Vision crystallizes direction

Exodus 3:17 (NIV)

And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites--a land flowing with milk and honey.'

God gave Moses clear directions where he was to lead the Israelites to. Leaders who have received vision from God know where to lead the people. The world today is suffering from leaders who lack vision. Political leaders conduct polls to form their policies because they want to please the majority. Christian leaders should not set direction on what pleases the majority, but on what is right in God's eyes. They then motivate the majority to follow that vision.



A clear vision, clearly communicated leads to clear directions. Church leaders must have a clear vision for the church or our areas of ministry. Then clear directions may be given that will inspire others.

Vision sustains

Difficult times will always come by and in those moments, it is easy for knees to weaken and doubts to enter. But a strong vision will enable us to focus on the goal ahead despite the agony of the troubles. Leaders with vision are the key to sustain and hold the people together in challenging times. Leaders help to determine the morale of the people. When the people see the leaders moving on, they will move with them. As soon as the leader shows signs of defeat and unwillingness to press on, the group will dissipate. That is why the church leader must not weaken in difficult times or lose their focus. Instead, we should be reminded of the vision that God has placed in our hearts and be encouraged in the Lord.

When we first started the church, we had a number of challenging situations. At times, it felt like our hard work may simply be sucked down the drain. However, we were determined not to be discouraged. Instead, we were reminded again and again about the vision of a large vibrant church that will be strong and biblical. The vision kept our focus on God and on the task ahead. All these years it has encouraged our hearts and it will continue to do so until the day we die.

Vision overcomes obstacles

Paul was able to declare in 2 Tim 4:7 (NIV84)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Vision not only sustains us through troubles but helps us to overcome obstacles too. We will climb over it or crawl under it. We will break through it or go around it. Nothing will prevent us from reaching the goal God has set for us. In leading our groups, we will always face obstacles. No obstacle is large enough to stop us from achieving God's plan for our group.



Thomas Edison's laboratory was once burnt down by a fire. Hundreds of inventions and valuable equipment was destroyed. When his son rushed to the site and saw the burnt shell of the laboratory, he was very concerned about how his dad would cope with the disaster. He found his dad, slowly picking up pieces of equipment amongst the smoking and charred remains. When Thomas saw his son, he exclaimed, "We must start rebuilding a bigger and better laboratory, we will get new equipment!". Thomas Edison was undaunted by the disaster. He chose to look to the future and overcome the present obstacle.

Vision unites

When the vision is great enough, it will attract people of different personalities, working styles, backgrounds to work together because of the possibility of great achievement. Great vision will inspire diverse people to overcome their differences to work together. A wise leader leverages upon a great vision to enable this to happen.

Qualities of Leaders Who Drive the Vision

It is one thing to have a vision. It is another to fulfil it. As we seek to be leaders of influence, we must seek to be those with the necessary qualities to drive the vision God has given us.

Values the vision

Understanding the value of our God-given vision is the starting point towards fulfilling it. Until and unless we see the immense value of the God-given vision, we will not have the necessary convictions to pay the price to accomplish it. Hence, it is inadequate to desire to fulfil God's vision, the church's vision or our leaders' vision unless we truly appreciate the value of the vision. Unless we realize that the vision is worth far more than our lives, we would not be able to invest our lives into it.



In the parable of the pearl, the merchant understood the great value of the pearl and was, therefore, more than willing to sell everything he owned for it. How valuable is our vision?

Ralph D. Winter, founder of US Center for World Missions stresses the importance of establishing church planting movements. Movements that will keep reproducing and multiplying new churches, because it is the best strategy to fulfil the Great Commission. This is exactly what our movement is about. However, for this to continue until Jesus returns, it is essential to build strong biblical people by discipling them one by one. It is with such people that we will have strong biblical churches that can reproduce themselves. Through such means, we can plant churches throughout the world that will continue multiplying themselves.

Wholehearted commitment

Wholehearted commitment is needed to fulfil the vision that God gives to us. Scriptures provides us many biblical examples of men who were totally committed to the God-given vision. Noah built the ark despite much persecution and ridicule. Caleb was wholehearted in entering and conquering the Promised Land even though it meant a wait of 45 years.

Can we keep the vision burning in our hearts until it comes to pass, despite any challenges? This is only possible when our commitment to the vision is wholehearted. Wholehearted commitment is required to grow our people and group. Commitment to a vision is contagious. People will catch what has caught you. People will follow leaders who have the commitment and the convictions.

Develop and seize opportunities

People with vision are not idle and laid-back, waiting for God to fulfil the vision. Instead, they seek for every opportunity to advance it with God. When God gives His vision to us, He expects us to do all we can to fulfil it. Are we seizing every opportunity to fulfil God's vision? Are we seizing every opportunity to grow and multiply our groups?



Excellence

Those who aim for mediocrity will not accomplish God's vision. Rather, it requires those with an attitude of excellence. Joseph was such a man who did excellently in everything he was given responsibility for.

Genesis 39:2-3 (NIV)

The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did.

Those with an attitude of excellence will be stretched by their vision to be better and more effective. They will grow and develop into better leaders.

Overcomes problems

Vision will be tested by many problems and adversities. It will generally bring you into conflict with others who will try to talk you out of it. All sorts of opposition may come against us as we move out in God's vision. This is part of God's testing process for the vision. Those who fulfil the vision learnt how to deal with obstacles with determination and wisdom.

Mobilize others to join the vision

Visionary people will share the vision with others and inspire them to join in the vision. Visionary people realize that it is not possible to accomplish God's vision by themselves. Hence, they make the effort to communicate it in such a way to mobilize others. When leaders fail to communicate an inspiring vision, they will have unmotivated people.

John Maxwell preached in a convention in Arizona that was held at the organizer's church, of which he was the pastor. The organizer told him that most of the attendees were retirees that had worked hard in churches in the East. Now they have come to enjoy their sunset years. He wanted John to go easy on them. John preached on "Why Retire When You Can Reenlist?" Three quarters of the retirees came up in response. The pastor wondered what happened to his saints. The saints were not the problem. The problem was the pastor who had lost the dream and settled for second best.





Conclusion

Vision provides more than a rudder for a ship, it also provides the fuel. A leader's vision is a key ingredient in their ability to lead significantly. To be an inspirational leader, we need to become a visionary leader.



Discussion Questions

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

1. Do you have a personal vision for your leadership? Are others following you in part due to your vision?
2. How would you describe your leadership vision? Is it inspiring? Does it have some of the elements of being compelling, credible, courageous and communicable?
3. How much has your vision had an impact upon your life and leadership? How much has it helped motivate, sustain, provided direction or help you overcome obstacles?

Actionable Steps

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. What 1 or 2 concrete steps you can take to develop an inspiring vision for your leadership?
2. What are the 1 or 2 steps you can take so that your vision become more motivating, sustaining, direction-providing and/or help you overcome obstacles?
3. What are some qualities of a leader that drives a vision, that you may be weak in? What specific steps can you take to be more of a leader that drives towards your vision?





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