

### LEADERSHIP AND VISION

#### EXERCISE

In groups of two or three reflect on the project you have been doing over the last month.

- What have you identified as your main training/development needs? In what areas of your own life and ministry would you most like to progress? Have you begun to identify ways in which you might move ahead in these areas?
- Who have you identified as those people whom you see as your biggest priority in terms of developing their potential? What action are you taking/planning to take in order to develop them?

Articulating the Vision may be the single most important responsibility that a leader has.  
(Walter Wright – *Relational Leadership*)

#### 1. The Vital Importance of Vision

***“Without a vision the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18)***

Leadership without vision and direction is simply meandering and not leadership at all. True leaders have a clear sense of where they are going and of the importance of taking others along with them.

Without direction and vision people don't do anything, don't go anywhere and don't achieve anything. Vision acts both as a compass, to set direction, and as a magnet, to draw people in. It provides, and acts as, a structure which enables change and development but which equally provides security in the midst of that change. It acts as a safe parameter within which change can unfold, giving a reason and incentive for change.

Vision increases peoples' ownership of a task or project and provides a clear focus. It gives meaning and purpose to a group and generates resources.

Vision is all about seeing things from God's perspective. We need to see and understand:

- Who God is and what he is about;
- Who we are in Christ;
- What God is calling us to do

The former senior leader of Gallup UK, Jill Garrett, in a seminar for CE's once pointed out that successful leaders ask themselves questions that unsuccessful ones do not. One of these was 'What does the future look like'. Vision is essentially the ability to see and understand the future which God has for us and to communicate it effectively to others.

Vision is a picture of the future that produces passion

*Bill Hybels*

'Visions are like lenses. They focus unrefracted rays of light. They enable everyone concerned with an enterprise to see more clearly what is ahead of them.'  
*Kouzes & Posner – The Leadership Challenge*

In one sense, vision is seeing beyond the limited horizons of life as we and others are living it.

### Cf Numbers 13:26-14:4

The people are prevented from entering into their inheritance and destiny simply because they refuse to look beyond the immediate. They have lost any sense of vision of God, his purposes and of their own identity and calling. Only Caleb, Joshua and Moses maintain vision

### Cf Ezra & Nehemiah

### Hebrews 12:2 cf. Mark 8:32

Jesus' vision of God's future enables him to see the cross in an entirely different light from Peter.

### The Key Contributions and Functions of Vision:

- Gives Direction  
Vision acts as a compass by which we navigate our way forward.

Vision is seeing tomorrow so powerfully that it shapes today	<i>Walter Wright</i>
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- Provides Focus & Protects us from distraction  
It shapes the way we organise our life together around a mission and helps us keep the main thing the main thing.
- Draws People in & increases ownership  
Vision acts as a magnet. When vision is cast and owned by people the church and its mission becomes '**our** church' rather than '**his/their** church'.

People need to know the main thing. What are we basically about as a church or as a group or ministry? When we have vision energy is increased and people are moved into action. Vision puts the match to the fuel that most people carry around in their hearts and yearn to have ignited. We leaders must keep striking that match by painting compelling Kingdom pictures. The Leadership gift is the only gift that provides this energising spark for the church. <i>Bill Hybels</i>
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- Fosters unity.
- People are prepared to overlook difference of opinion over detail for sake of bigger picture.
- Creates Structure for change  
That is, vision gives a reason for and acts as an incentive for change to take place but also provides security in the midst of that change as it sets clear and defined parameters within which change can unfold. E.g. Transition to Cell Structure; Mission vision.
- Provides Purpose  
Vision gives people a sense of their own place in God's unfolding purposes in history. Vision invests dynamism in the way in which we perceive ourselves and our specific responsibilities.
- Generates resources, personal and financial.

Vision is a powerful sense of what needs to be done and the initiative to take hold of it and work towards its completion. <i>George Verwer</i>
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## 2. Vision and the Leader

People do not follow a dream in itself or not for long anyway. They follow a leader who enfleshes that dream. Vision, in the beginning, may make a leader; but for that vision to grow and demand a following, the leader must take responsibility for it.

John Maxwell speaks of four Vision-levels of people:

1. Some people never see it (*Wanderers*)
2. Some people see it but never pursue it on their own (*Followers*)
3. Some people see it and pursue it (*Achievers*)
4. Some people see it and pursue it and help other people to see it (*Leaders*)

Vision is contagious and leads to others beginning to stand alongside the leader in the task. On the other hand, without vision, energy dissipates, achievement dips and people are nowhere to be seen.

Vision. It's the most potent weapon in a leader's arsenal. It's the weapon that unleashes the power of the church. *Bill Hybels*

I believe that creating a vision is the most important function of leadership. A good vision establishes a beacon of light that both the leader and the followers can latch onto and use to guide them from the day to day minutiae that can potentially sidetrack even the most pure of heart. A vision is simply a picture of an ideal state of what the leader wants his or her organisation to be sometime in the future. *Matthew Richter*

Leadership without vision and direction is simply meandering and not leadership at all. True leaders have a clear sense of where they are going and of the importance of taking others along with them. This picture of a preferred future is essential.

Great Biblical leaders had a clear sense of vision which energised and motivated them:

- Moses and Promised Land
- Jesus and joy set before him
- Paul (Acts 20)

All effective leaders have a vision of what they must accomplish. This vision gives energy for the accomplishment of the task and for the overcoming of problems.

Vision is contagious and leads to others beginning to stand alongside the leader in the task. On the other hand, without vision, energy dissipates, achievement dips and people are nowhere to be seen.

All effective leaders possess two things: They know where they are going and they are able to persuade others to follow.

Leadership requires a vision of a place that is better than where we are, along with an ability to communicate that vision clearly so that people want to embrace it. *Stan Slap*

### Cf Nehemiah 2:17-20

Vision should be a clearly communicable picture of the future, steeped in value, and philosophy, as well as structure. *Stan Slap*

'A leader is one who sees more than others see, who sees further than others see, and who sees before others do.'  
*Leroy Eims (Be the Leader you were meant to be)*

### 3. Receiving Vision

Sometimes vision comes directly from God whilst at other times it is mediated through other leaders. Vision always comes to those who are open and prepared to see things  
(Habbakuk 2:1-4)

Key elements in receiving vision include:

- Giving time to God
- Reading the signs of the times
- Meditating on Scripture
- Sharing with others

Leaders can never take people further than they have travelled themselves.

### 4. Sharing Vision

The first responsibility of leadership is to articulate the vision, to keep the mission and values before the church or organisation. Effective leaders offer a compelling picture of the future that motivates people to get involved. (*Walter Wright*)

In order to communicate vision, let people see your heart before they see your hope. People don't care how much you see until they see how much you care. Cultivate trust and then begin to paint a picture for others.

We don't all see the same things despite being in the same place at the same time. Effective leaders ask three questions about people:

- What do others see?
- Why do they see it that way?
- How can I change their perceptions?

Maxwell uses the image of painting a picture for people. This will include:

- Horizon – allow them to see the heights of their possibilities
- Sun – Leaders are dealers in hope
- Mountains – Challenges lead to drive to succeed
- Path – A way through the terrain which lies ahead
- Yourself – Never paint the vision without placing yourself in the picture.
- The things they love – Put what is important to the people within the frame of the vision and you will have transferred the vision to the people.

After you buy a car, you promptly see that make of car everywhere. That's because we find what we are looking for. The leader helps people develop this sensitivity and an eye for knowing what to look for. If the picture is painted clearly and shown continually, soon others will begin to see how it fits into everything they do. They will have a vision mind-set.

## 10 types of people who hinder a vision

1. **Limited Leaders.** Those who lack vision or the ability to pass it on successfully
2. **Concrete thinkers.** Those limited by their own horizons. GB Shaw – ‘Some people see things as they are and say ‘Why?’. I dream of things that never were and say ‘Why not?’”
3. **Dogmatic talkers.** Those who claim to know everything, but actually probably know nothing!
4. **Continual Losers.** Consumed with fear from past failures and fear risk of themselves or anyone else pursuing a vision .
5. **Satisfied sitters.** Those who strive for comfort, predictability and security above all else.
6. **Tradition lovers.** We’ve always done it this way!
7. **Census takers.** Those who never feel comfortable stepping out of a crowd and who will only embrace the vision when the majority does.  
**NB** True Leaders will always be in the minority because they are always thinking ahead of the present majority.
8. **Problem Perceivers.** Those who see a problem in every solution. JH Newman – Nothing would get done at all if a man waited until he could do something so well that no one could find fault with it.
9. **Self-Seekers.** Those who live for themselves
10. **Failure Forecasters.** Those who send a note of pessimism everywhere, whose outlook is always gloomy. Nothing in their life seems to expand or grow. Chinese Proverb: ‘Man who says it cannot be done should not interrupt man who is doing it.’

### EXERCISE

Find a quiet place for a few minutes and mull over the following questions:

- What is God’s primary purpose for the group/ministry which I lead, or in which I am involved? What does He believe is its primary reason for existing?
- To what extent does the group itself own this vision?
- What are the key ways in which this vision might be advanced? What are the major hindrances to the progress of this vision?
- What might God be asking me to do to further and develop this vision, and how can I achieve this?

Now get into groups of 3 or 4 to share what God has been showing you and to pray for one another.

### PROJECT

Over the three months of the summer, do an in depth study of the leadership of *either* Nehemiah or Moses. Read either the book of Nehemiah (Nehemiah) or Exodus 1-6, 13-18, 33, Numbers 13-14 (Moses) a few times and make some notes on key elements of this person’s leadership of others and of himself, noting some of the struggles and challenges which he faced and the ways in which he dealt with them. John White’s superb book ‘*Excellence in Leadership*’ is a brilliant spotlight on the career of Nehemiah. At the next leadership session in September you will be asked to give some feedback to a small group on significant lessons you have learned.