worldoutreach

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES SIX

MODULE THREE: SIX STAGES OF TRANSLATING VISION INTO REALITY

Outline Session 1 - 2

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SESSION ONE: SIX STAGES OF TRANSLATING VISION INTO REALITY (PART ONE)

Definition of terms:

- *Vision* gives the overall direction of the church or ministry
- *Strategic planning* determines how the church or ministry will move forward in specific actions. Strategic planning is organising the sequential steps, scheduling people and tasks, and developing deadlines, to accomplish the action step. In simple terms, the role of strategic planning is to determine *who* is to do *what* by *when* to accomplish each action toward an agreed objective.
- *Goals*, then, become the measurable outcome of each strategy or plan
- *Delegation* determines who will fulfil specific tasks and roles in the strategic plan

SIX STAGES IN THE JOURNEY OF TRANSLATING VISION INTO REALITY.

STAGE ONE: CONCEPTION

This is the point at which a leader receives a vision from God. It conceives within a leader's heart.

So, how does a leader receive vision from God?

As we saw with Nehemiah in a previous module, vision comes by revelation. Essentially, this means that vision comes from having an encounter with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals God's plans and purposes by moving upon a leader's life and conceiving divine vision within their heart.

This conception of vision takes place in either one of two ways:

1. By *the sovereign initiative of God*

God providentially initiates and reveals his plans and purposes to a leader of his choosing, at the time of his choosing, for the purpose of his choosing. Example – Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:15).

2. In *response to a leader's specific prayer*

How does the Lord reveal the vision?

There is not one common way because everyone is different. It could be one of the following ways:

- In a season of prayer or in a dedicated time of seeking the Lord
- In response to a call to serve God

- Through a prophetic word from a credible prophetic ministry
- Occasionally, by having an encounter with the Lord through a dream, vision or visitation
- Seeing a need and feeling the prompting of God to do something about it

If you don't yet have a vision for your leadership, ask the Lord boldly and expectantly. Or, if you've lost your vision, ask the Lord to revive your vision.

STAGE TWO: INCUBATION (OR GESTATION) STAGE

After conception, the vision grows within a leader's life. Like natural conception, the implanted 'seed' of vision grows and develops within the 'womb' of the 'expectant' leader. The gestation period will vary from leader to leader and depends on many factors.

Before a leader shares the vision with anyone else, the 'incubation' stage is when a leader seeks:
conviction - the absolute certainty that the vision is from God
clarification - the leader knows clearly what God wants them to do and where to go
contextualisation - how the vision fits into the organisational culture and broader culture
comprehension - they grasp the magnitude of the God-given vision and their role in it

This process will involve:
- Focused and fervent prayer
- Weighing the vision against Scripture (to ensure it is consistent with the principles of God's Word)
- Working through the potential issues in one's own life and leadership

An example of a leader working through issues is Moses' call to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. Moses had to wrestle with issues of identity (Exodus 3:11), insecurity (4:1-9), inadequacy (4:10-12) and unwillingness (4:13) as he sought to understand what God had placed in his heart. The Lord did a great deal of work within Moses' heart before he was ready for the next stage of God's unfolding purpose.

SESSION TWO: SIX STAGES OF TRANSLATING VISION INTO REALITY (PART TWO)

STAGE THREE: FORMULATION (STRATEGIZING) STAGE

Let's break this point down into a number of important steps:

A. Choose a core vision team very carefully and prayerfully (although you may have an existing eldership, oversight, vision team)

The term 'vision team' is an all-encompassing term for the 'body' (whatever it may be called in your context) which develops and implements the vision with you.

Here are some qualities for choosing members of a vision team:

- Proven personal relationship – the individuals you choose have demonstrated their commitment & loyalty to the church or ministry
- Big thinkers – select people who are not incapacitated by small or limited thinking
- Possess active faith – each member of the team should exhibit a genuine 'faith' to actively believe for what God has placed in your heart
- Skilled and experienced – choose people with different skills, especially skills that complement yours as the senior leader
- Competent and committed to translate vision into action – each one should have the capacity and willingness to execute the vision through to its completion
- Spiritual and kingdom-minded – handpick people who exemplify a genuine spirituality and possess a 'Kingdom' mindset

B. Articulate the vision

Write the vision down succinctly and in a clear, self-explanatory fashion, then…

- Present it to the vision team (or whatever 'body' you are working with)
- Allow the members of the vision team to ask questions so they get clarity in their own minds
- Don't be insecure about this process, but welcome questions so that each member of the team can gain a sense of understanding and ownership
- Remember, too, no-one will ever see it the same way that you do. Why? Because they didn't receive revelation. You did! Your job is to articulate and embody it
- Keep going over it until the team 'gets' (sees) it (as best they can)

C. Shape the vision (with the vision team)

Once the vision team have 'caught' the vision, the next step is to meet as a team on a regular basis to shape the vision. There is no right or wrong timeframe for these regular meetings. It depends on many variables. Allow sufficient time to discuss and think through all the aspects of the vision. Discuss the following questions:

- What will the vision look like? Picture (envision) it
- How are we going to get there? Plan it (enlarged in next step)
- Who is going to do what? Identify the right people for the appropriate tasks (such as: minute taker, correspondence, research, etc.)
- When are we going to implement it? Time frame (e.g. are we going to implement it immediately or progressively?)

Here are some further suggestions for the actual meetings themselves:

- Have a standard agenda for every meeting – ensure it has been distributed prior to each gathering
- Appoint a chairperson to guide the conversations
- Keep accurate and detailed minutes of each meeting
- Rigorously keep the meetings focussed
- Systematically review and summarise the discussions to date

D. Strategic planning

As mentioned in another module, strategic planning is a *response* to God-given vision. It is *how* a leader is going to execute the vision which God has placed in their heart. Even though vision comes from God, it needs to be responded to in a strategic way. Strategic planning and actions are a leader's *response* to God-given vision.

Here is a suggested step-by-step process in strategic planning:

(a) Researching

- Conduct a ruthlessly honest assessment of how things are at the moment?
- Conduct an accurate audit of the ministries' or churches' present resources (both people and physical). The purpose of the audit is twofold:
  (i) to find out what current resources you have for the future vision,
  (ii) identify what resources are needed to fulfil the vision?
- Conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis
- Deputise some of the team to visit other ministries or churches to research how they have processed similar vision
- Collate, summarise and reflect on the results from above

(b) Planning

- Formulate a step by step (sequential) process for how the vision will be implemented. Be detailed and specific
- Determine a realistic timeframe for when each progressive step is to be achieved or implemented (e.g. research completed, leaders trained, public launch of vision)
- Determine who will do what. Be specific and detailed, write clear roles & responsibilities, determine individual goals, record when set tasks are to be completed

- Determine a training program for the leaders and volunteers
- Plan the financial implications of the vision with the Church Board / Council
- Review the plan to ascertain whether any new procedures and/or structures need to be adopted or adapted
- Set goals to measure the implementation of each step
- Review the strategic plan in detail so that all the vision team sign off on it

The strategic planning phase may take many months. It is wiser to take considerable time in the planning stage. This will ensure the overall plan and its implementation is well developed and enacted.

E. Explain the vision to the key leaders and vision-bearers

Once the process of strategic planning is completed, the next step is to explain the vision to the key leaders within the congregation who will carry a direct responsibility for its implementation. This communication should come from you as the senior leader, preferably one-on-one or in very small intimate groups of key leaders. Some ideas are:

- Refer back to point 'B' for ideas on how to 'Articulate the Vision'
- Explain in as much detail as possible how the strategic plan relates to their ministry area
- Ensure they understand what they are responsible to do and achieve
- Delegate responsibility, empowering people to execute the vision (according to the strategic plan)

SESSION THREE: SIX STAGES OF TRANSLATING VISION INTO REALITY (PART THREE)

STAGE FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

A fourth stage in the realisation of God-given vision is the implementation stage.

Remembering that one of the distinguishing features of leaders is that they are change agents. They lead people *to* change, then *through* change. How? Here are some ideas:

A. Cast the vision
Cast the vision repeatedly to the congregation in concentric circles starting from the core leaders through to the congregation – Eldership, Board, Staff, Ministry/department leaders, general leaders/volunteers, congregation.

KEY! Preaching and teaching for the vision. A lot of successful vision realisation comes through focussed preaching that changes and equips people.

Sam Chand notes that: 'The vision must be both *global* and *specific* – too big for anyone to accomplish without the power of God, but with handles on each person's specific role in fulfilling aspects of the overall vision.'

B. Implement the strategic plan
Follow the step by step (sequential) plan formulated by the vision team.

C. Monitor the key leaders as they implement their aspect of the plan
The strategic plan is what gives you and the other leaders a clear sense of what to do and where you are heading with your leadership. The strategic plan is what your team and key leader's performance is measured against. It is also what they are held accountable for. One of your primary roles is to keep the leaders centred on the strategic plan.

D. Equipping and mobilising people
The next step in implementing vision is the equipping and mobilising of people. This will require very intentional and thoughtful development of people through:

- Specific training courses that equip people for the vision
- Personal discipleship and mentoring to nurture people
- Raising leaders
- Gift identification courses
- Placement of people in roles conducive with their call and gift
- Mobilisation and empowering of people
- Developing a culture of 'volunteerism' to inspire people to serve

E. Lead the congregation (or organisation) through change

- Constantly weave the vision into all your public and personal communication
- Lovingly and patiently (but firmly) deal with opposition to, or misunderstanding of, the vision
- Persevere in difficult moments. Don't be derailed by a vocal minority who may resist the vision
- Pray specifically, fervently and regularly for the people to embrace the vision
- Celebrate key successes and milestones
- Embody your personal commitment to the vision (and change) through your personal example
- Keep casting the vision creatively and consistently

Andy Stanley wrote: 'When a plan or strategy fails, people are tempted to assume it was the wrong vision. Plans and strategies can always be changed and improved. But vision doesn't change. Visions are simply refined with time.'

STAGE FIVE: REALISATION STAGE

A fifth stage in seeing God-given vision come to pass is the realisation stage. As the leader leads the implementation, initiates change and equips people for the future, the vision is progressively realised. It will, however, need monitoring.

- Set specific quantitative and qualitative goals to measure the implementation and effectiveness of vision
- Be realistic in your measurement of success or otherwise
- Adjust, realign and recalibrate people and resources
- Establish the new paradigm (direction) until it becomes the 'norm'
- Celebrate major developments
- Honour people who serve, especially those who sacrifice and serve above and beyond the ordinary
- Give thanks to God for all that He has done
- Be open for further God-initiated change

STAGE SIX: REFLECTION STAGE

As the vision begins to unfold, remember there's always more. So, in preparation for the future, it'd be wise to do some reflection on the five stages to date by asking questions like:

- What did you learn?
- What did you do right and what did you do wrong?
- What should you have given more time to and given less time to?
- If you could do it all over again, what will you do differently?
- What is the Lord putting in my heart now about the future?

Write down your answers, discuss them with the vision team, reflect on them, apply the lessons for the future and seek to help others learn the lessons.

THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES IN FULFILLING GOD-GIVEN VISION

1. Refuse to be distracted

Once you have received a vision, and you are following the stages outlined in this module, resolutely refuse to be distracted.

Three examples in Scripture of leaders maintaining their vision despite major diversions:

A. Nehemiah was undistracted and undeterred by his enemies' scheme to entice him away from the work, presumably to do him harm (6:1-3).

B. Jesus did not allow the well-meaning but misguided words of Peter, or the deceptive, corrupt words of Satan through Peter, to deter him from his mission.

C. Luke 9:51 records that Jesus made his way to Jerusalem to accomplish the Father's redemptive plan with complete single-mindedness of purpose and unshakable resolve.

2. Pursue the vision

In Philippians 3:12, Paul employed a metaphor taken from the world of athletics, hunting and chariot racing to communicate his intense yearning for spiritual growth, development and maturity. He wrote how he was 'pressing on' toward the goal, that being to know Christ. The Greek word translated 'press on' is a vigorous word and can mean 'to pursue or chase' in the sense of 'to follow'. Paul transparently wrote of his burning intention to pursue and apprehend Christ and his purposes with determination, discipline and devotion. Likewise, we must not be passively content with having a God-given vision, but proactively pursue the Lord to fulfil *all* that he's put in our hearts.

3. Undergird everything in prayer

We should take each step prayerfully, asking for God's wisdom and the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Suggestion: View other modules from prior series, such as: Delegation and Planning.