

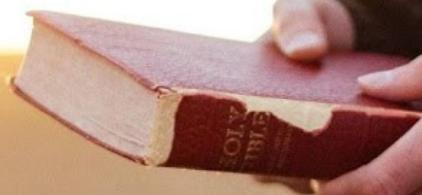


worldoutreach
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES FIVE

MODULE ONE:

DEFINING GOD-GIVEN VISION



Outline Session 1 - 2

1. Defining God-given Vision (Part 1)
2. Defining God-given Vision (Part 2)

SESSION ONE: DEFINING GOD-GIVEN VISION (PART ONE)

The word 'vision' is used in a number of ways in our language:

- It is a word we use to describe our eyesight
- Another use of the word 'vision' is in relation to our imagination, like a mental image, either fuelled by our anxiety or perhaps hope
- For others, 'vision' is an experience in which they see things that do not exist physically when their mind is affected by something like drugs or a psychotic episode
- The word 'vision' is also used to describe someone's (Oxford Languages) '...ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom.'
- Cambridge Dictionary defines 'vision' as: 'The ability to imagine how a country, society, industry, etc., will develop in the future and to plan in a suitable way.'
- Many leaders in the fields of the arts, business, science, medicine and industry get creative, innovative and, at times, revolutionary ideas that would be classified as 'visionary'

Contrasts between natural, inherent vision to the vision of a ministry leader?

1. The source of vision

- A Christian leader's vision is from *God*
- It is of divine origin and source
- 'Vision', in a Christian ministry context, is not the product of natural thought or processes; rather, (as we'll soon discover) it is a revelation from God to the heart of a leader

2. The power and capacity to fulfil the vision

- A 'natural' vision can be accomplished by natural means (e.g. hard work, finance, skilled people, etc.)
- In stark contrast, 'God-given' vision can only be achieved through the combination of human factors (just mentioned) *and* divine enablement
- If God has given a Christian leader a vision, then only he can provide the divine enablement, resources (human and physical), power and grace to accomplish it

Qualifying statement

Even though 'vision' from God is not a business plan (as such), it needs to be responded to in a strategic way. A strategic plan is the leader's response to God-given vision. Vision is from God; strategy is our response to God-given vision.

Scriptural use of the word 'vision'

'Vision' is a biblical word. It describes one of the ways in which God chose to supernaturally communicate his messages to and through the Old Testament (OT) prophets (Isaiah 6:1-13;

Ezekiel 1:1). A 'vision' in this OT sense is a heaven-sent 'picture' carrying a prophetic message which the prophet was to deliver.

In the New Testament, God sometimes spoke to people through the means of a vision, but this was normally for an extraordinary purpose (Acts 10:10-20; 9:10-16). Often, any such vision was of an angel or the Lord Jesus himself (Acts 9:10-16; 27:23-24). On the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted Joel to say that visions would be one of the features of the Spirit's work in the 'last days' (Acts 2:17; cf. Joel 2:28-32).

Vision, in the contemporary church sense, is not one of these 'ecstatic' experiences, but is a revelation to the heart of the ministry leader.

Definitions of vision by popular Christian authors:

- In his ground-breaking book, *Lead On*, John Haggai defined vision as '...a clear picture of what the leader sees his group being or doing.'
- Church researcher, George Barna, wrote an influential book in the early 1990s entitled, *The Power of Vision*, in which he proposed that: 'Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.'
- Aubrey Malphurs proposes that vision is a '...clear, challenging picture of the future of the church, as leaders believe that it can and must be.' He went on to write that vision must paint '...a compelling picture of what the direction will look like. It communicates not *what is* but *what could be*. It answers the question, "What will it look like around here when our people become passionate and get excited about making and maturing believers?"'
- In similar fashion to Malphurs' definition, John Stott reportedly said that 'vision is a combination of a deep dissatisfaction with what is and a clear grasp of what could be.'

SESSION TWO: DEFINING GOD-GIVEN VISION (PART TWO)

Contemporary notion of 'vision' in a biblical framework - Nehemiah's leadership. Based on Nehemiah's example, we discover a number of insights into the nature of God-given vision.

A. Vision is what God places in a leader's heart.

Nehemiah wrote: '*I had not told anyone what my **God had put in my heart** to do for Jerusalem*' (2:12). This is a definition of vision in Scripture's own words: **what God places in a leader's heart.**

B. Vision is a revelation.

Nehemiah received vision as a revelation from God. It was a divine disclosure giving insight into God's plans for Nehemiah's life and leadership. What we learn through this is that God is a God of plans and purposes (Jeremiah 29:11), and that he reveals his plans and purposes to leaders.

In theology, we believe that God knows all things past, present and future. We call this God's *omniscience*, which is his attribute of all-knowledge or knowing everything that can be known or will be known. Vision, then, is when God takes a fragment of his foreknowledge – his before-the-event knowledge of the future – and reveals it to a leader.

C. Vision is what a leader 'sees' beyond their natural sight.

In a physical, material and visible sense, what Nehemiah inspected in Jerusalem that night must have been a mess. While Nehemiah visibly saw the devastated state of Jerusalem, he also saw something which was invisible to the human eye – he saw what God had placed in his heart. Vision, therefore, could be considered as what we see with our eyes closed, because what we see with our eyes closed is often more important than what we see with our eyes open.

Example – Abraham's faith (Romans 4:18-21; cf. Hebrews 11:11)

In seeking to define God-given vision, we've noted that, based on Nehemiah's example, vision is what God puts in the heart of a leader by revelation (divine disclosure), which gives the leader an insight into God's unique plans and purposes for the church (or ministry) he or she is leading. Vision is to see something that is not yet visible as it will be.

Why is vision important?

- Vision gives a leader navigation into the future by helping leaders to set the right course.
- Vision equips a leader to know where they're leading the church (or organisation), its people and leaders.

- Vision produces a leader's energy to enact change, initiate strategic actions and solve problems.
- Vision builds unity and momentum in the church (or organisation) as people work and pray towards goals.
- Vision helps a leader to prioritise their use of time.
- Vision guides a leader in her or his decision-making processes.
- Vision necessitates a leader to find the right person for the right role.
- Vision breeds passion about God's purposes in the leader and their followers.
- Vision provides a compelling motivation for why a leader does what they do in leadership.
- Andy Stanley suggests that: 'Vision translates into purpose', which gives the leader a captivating sense of what they're on the earth to do.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Irish playwright, socialist, Nobel Prize and Oscar winner, once wrote that: 'Some men see things that *are* and say *why?* I dream things that *never were*, and say "*Why not?*"?' In response to God putting a vision in our heart as a leader, can we not loudly declare, 'Why not!' Is anything impossible for the Lord?