

## Leadership and Vision

The speaking of “vision” has come along in the last several decades. The concept of vision has been around since the beginning of time. The Bible, from beginning to end, is all about vision. The first three chapters of Genesis give evidence of the ultimate vision paradise/heaven and the recovery after sin came into the world.

Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” (KJV) The nation of Israel was a theocracy therefore their attention and worship was to focus totally on God. The ESV has “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint...” For any Christian group or organization God and His Word need to be the starting point. Dr. Merton Strommen says it well in his book *The Innovative Church* p. 13: Mission does not originate with a congregation. It has its origin in the heart of God.

Matthew 1:21 the angel tells Joseph to name the son to be born of Mary Jesus, “because He will save His people from their sins.” No one was more focused than Jesus was in Luke 9:51, “As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”

Jesus before ascending to heaven gave, His disciples and us, a vision that will last until He comes again. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.” He adds two means for doing so, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

In my first year of teaching elementary children I was put in charge preparing the whole school for what was called, “Play Day.” “Play Day” consisted of a wide variety of athletic contests. One of those events was a “Tug-of-War Pull. I learned that if the rope is not held totally straight the team is really pulling against itself and may well lose. A vision is like that in that if there are diverging views about the future of the organization much energy will be wasted on wayward efforts.

Vision leads the leader. It paints the target. It sparks and fuels the fire within. It is also the fire lighter for others who follow that leader. (Maxwell, John, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* p. 211)

I had the privilege to be the principal of 3 Lutheran Schools. I worked with the Board of Education to set a vision for what God wanted to accomplish through that school. It wasn't long and all those interested in Lutheran education joined to make the vision a reality.

The statements below exemplify the scope and value of vision for leaders and organizations:

...Vision suggests a future orientation. Vision is an image, a picture of what could be. It connotes a standard of excellence, an ideal. It implies a choice of values. Vision also has the quality of uniqueness. It hints at what makes something special. (Kouzes, James, Posner, Barry, *Leadership Challenge* p. 95)

...The leader is the one who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the entire situation, and yells, "Wrong Jungle." (Covey, Stephen, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* p. 101)

...A shared vision is a force in people's hearts, a force of impressive power. It may be inspired by an idea, but once it goes further - if it is compelling enough to acquire the support of more than one person- then it is no longer an abstraction. A vision is truly shared when you and I have a similar picture and are committed to one another having it, not just to each of us, individually, having it. When people truly share a vision they are connected, bound together by a common aspiration. Shared vision is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus and energy for learning. (Senge, Peter M., *The Fifth Discipline* p. 206)

...Animal trainers carry a stool when they go into a cage of lions. Those who know maintain that the animal tries to focus on all four legs at once. In the attempt to focus on all four, kind of paralysis overwhelms the animal, and it became tame, weak, and disabled because its attention is fragmented. (Maxwell, John, *Developing the Leader Within You* p. 31)

...If you chase two rabbits, both will escape. (Maxwell, John, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* p. 51)

...A vision of the future is not offered once and for all by the leader and then allowed to fade away. It must be repeated time and time again. It must be incorporated in the organization's culture and reinforced through the strategy and decision-making process. It must be constantly evaluated for possible change in the light of new circumstances. (Bennis, Warren, Nanus, Burt, *Leaders* p. 101)