

The Power of Perspective

Clarifying the “Why,” “What” and “How” of Our Life and Ministry

By Les Taylor

“The only measure of what you believe is what you do. If you want to know what people really believe, don’t read what they write, don’t ask what they say they believe, just observe what they do.” (Ashley Montagu)

Developing and maintaining perspective is possibly the single most important role of any ministry leader. Why? Because perspective clarifies what we believe and how we should behave.

Both the Old and New Testaments present the fundamental principle that belief manifests itself in behavior. What we believe individually and corporately will reveal itself in what we do. Without a clearly defined belief system, an individual or organization will merely drift along, setting no clear course for an intended destination.

Developing perspective enables us to see our life and ministry from a particular vantage point. It clarifies what we believe, explains why we exist and helps us focus on where we intend to go. Perspective keeps us “on course.” When we develop perspective, we understand more clearly our purpose in life. It shows us where we’re going and helps us determine how we’re going to get there.

Our perspective will be clarified when we understand three things: our mission, vision and values.

The “North Star”

Mission describes our purpose, our reason for being. It describes the grand purpose for which an organization exists. Mission is not a prod-

uct or service, or even a destination point, it’s our “North Star,” serving as a guide to make sure our ministry is always headed in the right direction.

As followers of Christ, we all have the same mission, codified for us in the Westminster Confession of Faith over 500 years ago: “Glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Our mission defines our reason for being. And therein lies the power of a well-defined mission.

The mission statement for a church or ministry should do the same thing, stating the grand purpose for which it exists. It explains why we exist.

But before we can move toward fulfilling our mission, we must visualize the vision for our ministry.

Visualizing the Vision

Vision is seeing in our mind’s eye where we want to go or what we want to change. It’s seeing what *could be*, as opposed to *what is*. More often than not, vision is seeing our “preferred change.”

Whether starting a ministry from scratch or changing a ministry that’s been in place for years, leaders must be able to see in their mind’s eye what changes have to be made to get a ministry from where it is to where it needs to be. George Barna, in his marvelous book, *Turning Vision into Action*, says “Vision focuses on what you want the future to be like and your role in creating that particular future.”

Barna also issues the warning that turning a vision into reality is always difficult,



because vision involves *change* and change is never easily embraced. Studies show that, for most people, stepping out of their “comfort zones” is very difficult indeed. Most people only want change when its alternative is worse. We love our comfort zones.

While God’s Word never changes, it changes everything else. Vision casting is the ministry leader’s first job.

The Value of Values

Values are the guiding principles that govern and direct our behavior, individually and organizationally. While mission defines the grand purpose for which we exist, and vision describes the changes and challenges we’ll face, values speak to our *character*. Values deter-

mine how we’ll behave and what we’ll be known for.

Here’s the cold, hard truth of values, though. For values to be real, they must be *seen*. Remember what our friend Ashley Montagu said, “The only measure of what you believe is what you do.”

In the final analysis, *what we do* will judge the reality of *what we say* we believe. *Clarifying* our core values and then *committing* to live by them provide real perspective for ourselves, and for those who follow us.

It’s by clarifying our mission, vision and values that we develop perspective. With the power of perspective, we can make a difference in this world, fulfilling our reason for being.

Moving an organization from activity to achievement requires a grasp of three principles implemented through six steps. This is the first of three articles, dealing with the first principle: “clarifying perspective.” Parts two and three of this series will address the principles of “defining performance” and “maintaining alignment.”

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