VISIONARY DIFFERENCES

Chris Messerer

Abstract

Organizational vision is nearly universally accepted as being critically important to a church in any stage of growth or decline. Church plants and church revitalization efforts depend on organizational vision because it provides focus and direction. Organizational vision is also important because it inspires people to participate. Successful church planters and church revitalization leaders excel at casting vision.[1]

While church plants and church revitalizations have similarities, leading one is significantly different from leading the other. Likewise, organizational vision is different between a church plant and a church revitalization. This article analyzes the differences between an organizational vision for a church plant and a church revitalization. To accomplish this analysis, provision of a proper definition for organizational vision is central to the

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1   I define a successful church as one that is making a significant impact for Christ on the community. This definition does not imply that churches of a certain size are only the successful churches; in fact, a megachurch may not be successful while a church of 20 people may be successful. Success is determined by community impact.

task. After a definition and biblical examples of organizational vision are given, methods of how to obtain and cast a vision are discussed. Next, this article shows the benefits that organizational vision has for both church plants and church revitalization efforts. Finally, the differences between the organizational visions for church plants and church revitalizations are analyzed.

DEFINITIONS[2]

In this section, I analyze the different suggested definitions for organizational vision offered by scholars in business, secular leadership, and church leadership fields, followed by a definition useful for the focus of this article. After giving my definition for organizational vision, I present an analysis differentiating between organizational vision and supernatural vision.

Business and Secular Leadership Theory

One of the earliest mentions of organizational vision was in a 1957 article by Margaret Mead, defining vision as "a possible and more desirable future."[3] While business administration resources stressed the term *forward thinking* through the 1970s, *vision* was not a commonly used term until the book *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, in which Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus defined vision as "a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization. This image, which we call vision, may be as vague as a dream or as precise as a goal or mission statement. The critical point is that a vision *articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization*, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists."[4]

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2   This section was adapted from a research paper that I presented in the doctoral seminar, "Principles of Administration." Chris Messerer, "Without Vision People Perish?" Research Paper, "Principles of Administration," Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

3   Margaret Mead, "Towards More Vivid Utopias," *Science* 126, no. 3280 (November 8, 1957): 957.

4   Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 82. The first edition of this book was published in 1985.

Nanus wrote *Visionary Leadership*, which expands on the definition he co-wrote with Bennis, defining vision as "a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization. It is your articulation of a destination toward which your organization should aim, a future that in important ways is better, more successful, or more desirable for your organization than is the present."[5] In other words, Nanus explains that vision is a goal that will help the organization be better in the future. A vision will help the organization improve itself.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner defined vision similarly as "an ideal and unique image of the future."[6] While the definition is similar to the definition Nanus provides, it is different in that the authors include the term *unique*; only one organization will be able to fulfill its unique vision. The vision will need to be developed by each organization individually; one vision will not successfully be implemented in two different organizations.

From these secular definitions of vision, three common elements can be seen. First, vision is always future-oriented. These definitions define vision as what the organization should be in the future. The second common element is that these visions are initiated by the executives from the organizations. In other words, these visions are human-initiated. Thirdly, these visions fulfill the desire to help the company grow in profit and/or market share.

Christian Leadership Theory

This section analyzes the definitions that Christian leadership scholars provide. *To Dream Again* by Robert Dale was one of the first books in Christian literature that mentioned organizational vision, which he defined in a similar way as did the secular writers: "Now, what's the common theme? Vision. In each case there's a dream of what a church should be."[7]

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5   Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership: Creating a Compelling Sense of Direction for Your Organization* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 8.

6   James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 95.

7   Robert D, Dale, *To Dream Again: How to Help Your Church Come Alive*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 12. The first edition of this work was published in 1981.

He defines vision as a dream and utilizes the concept of an *idealized future*.

George Barna defined vision as "a clear mental image of a preferable future, imparted by God to His chosen servants, based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances."[8] This definition is unique, as it mentions that vision is a developmental process between God and "His chosen servants." While Barna differentiates his definition by adding the God factor, he mimics secular organizational theory by identifying vision as a mental image and by indicating that a vision will be unique to its organization due to its circumstances.

Bill Hybels, the former pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, provided a distinct definition for vision: "*Vision is a picture of the future that produces passion.*"[9] Vision is an outflow from the leader's passion that inspires church members to mimic their passion to move the church to an ideal future.[10] Hybels's definition adds to previous definitions by including the aspect of passion; vision involves passion.

The former pastor of Wooddale Church in suburban Minneapolis, Leith Anderson, provided a context for vision: "Vision answers the 'what if?' question."[11] Vision answers the question: "What should a leader do? Ask the vision question: *What would the future look like if our purpose really happened?*"[12] Three peculiarities about this description are important to understand. First, the vision is about possibilities, which follows the dream theme found in other definitions. Second, vision is based on the purpose, or mission, of the congregation. Thirdly, this description appears to be solely focused on the leader, rather than God.

Aubrey Malphurs stated: "I define organizational vision as a clear and challenging picture of the future of a ministry as you believe that it can and must be."[13] Malphurs cited an article written by John Stott for the basis

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8   George Barna, *Without a Vision the People Perish* (Glendale, CA: Barna Research Group, 1991), 28.

9   Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 32.

10   Ibid., 32-33.

11   Leith Anderson, *Leadership That Works: Hope and Direction for Church and Parachurch Leaders in Today's Complex World* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 195.

12   Ibid., 197.

13   Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 32. See similar definitions in Aubrey Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of*

of his definition of vision, which says that vision "is an act of seeing—an imaginative perception of things, combining insight and foresight. More particularly . . . it is a deep dissatisfaction with what is and a clear grasp of what could be."[14] These definitions show similarities with others: vision is about the future, is based on conviction, and is due to passion. The main difference is that Malphurs indicated that vision involves a specific goal and will be a challenge for the congregation to fulfill. Vision will not be simple to complete.

Andy Stanley provided a definition similar to that of Malphurs and Stott, stating vision is "a clear mental picture of what could be, fueled by the conviction that it should be."[15] As with Malphurs and Stott, Stanley says that vision is based on conviction and is an idealized picture of the future. One important distinction made between these definitions and secular leadership definitions is that most of the Christian definitions replace the term *dream* with another term, whether it is *mental picture* or *imagination*.

So far, the Christian leadership definitions for vision are fairly similar to each other and to secular leadership definitions. However, two other definitions offer their unique perspectives. George Bullard provided his definition: "Vision is a movement of God that is memorable rather than a statement of humankind that is memorized."[16] This definition is different because the initiator of the vision is God. Also, this definition indicates how a successful vision will impact a group of people, as shown by the word *memorable*. While one can appreciate that this definition gives God credit for vision, human leadership still has participation in the vision.

Yet another interesting discussion about vision is found in works by

Church Planting: A Guide for Starting Any Kind of Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 100; Aubrey Malphurs, *Ministry Nuts and Bolts: What They Don't Teach Pastors in Seminary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1997), 92; Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st- Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 3rd Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 134. The only difference between these four books is the focus theme of the book.

14   John R.W. Stott, "What Makes Leadership Christian?" *Christianity Today*, 9 August 1985, 24-25.

15   Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Personal Vision* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1999), 18; Andy Stanley, *Making Vision Stick* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 15.

16   George W. Bullard Jr., *Captured by Vision: 101 Insights to Empower Your Congregation* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2017), ch. 1, "Vision is a Movement of God That is Memorable," Kindle.

Gary McIntosh and Will Mancini. In *There's Hope for Your Church*, McIntosh defined vision "as the intersection of the pastor's leadership passion, the passion and gifts of the congregation, and the community needs. . . . Where these three concepts intersect is the vision God has for your church."[17] Mancini said, "The first step in ascertaining a unique vision is to discover your Kingdom Concept."[18] He described *Kingdom Concept* as the intersection of the local predicament (community needs), collective potential (passion and gifts of the congregation), and apostolic espirit (passion of the pastor).[19] He defined *Vision Proper* as "*the living language that anticipates and illustrates God's better intermediate future*."[20] Thus, McIntosh's definition of vision is very similar to Mancini's description of Kingdom Concept.

The aforementioned definitions of vision within the church leadership field exhibit three characteristics. First, these definitions mention vision as the direction God has for the church. While the church's leaders still develop the vision, they seek God's will for the vision. The second common characteristic is that these visions are outward focused, connecting the church members' gifts with the community. Thirdly, the Great Commission is the basis for the church's vision. Even with these three characteristics, the definitions are related to the definitions in secular leadership theory.

My Definition

So far, I have examined definitions for vision based on secular and Christian leadership theory. Based on these definitions, I define organizational vision as "the local church's unique and inspiring implementation of the global church's mission."[21] This definition needs

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17   Gary L. McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 74.

18   Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 84.

19   Ibid., 84-98. Even though Mancini places vision in a framework connecting mission, values, strategy, and measures, the Kingdom Concept is the main facet of the vision, as it influences every-thing in the vision (114).

20   Ibid., 170.

21   Messerer, "Without Vision People Perish?" 7.

some clarification. First, this vision is determined by the pastor's passion and gifts. Second, it is based on the community's needs. Third, God's will is sought when the vision is being drafted by the leadership. Fourth, the global church's mission should be based on the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matt 22:37-39).[22]

Supernatural Vision and Organizational Vision

Many scholars in the Christian leadership field assume that supernatural vision and organizational vision are identical. To show the difference between the two, an explanation for supernatural vision is necessary.

Supernatural Vision

Supernatural vision has been defined as "the communication of that which is not otherwise accessible, divinely imparted to the man of God, most often the prophet."[23] Vision in the Bible is based "upon the ecstatic nature of the experience, and the revelatory character of the knowledge."[24] In other words, supernatural vision is God directly communicating to a specific person to share His truth.

Two examples from the Bible that illustrate this definition are 1 Samuel 3 (God speaking to Samuel) and Acts 10:9-17 (Peter and the vision of unclean food on the sheet). These two passages exemplify that the vision is a clear communication from God commanding an action that His chosen person is supposed to follow. Likewise, these visions are different from a typical dream people experience in their sleep.[25] Such a vision "indicates a supernatural experience in which a divine revelation is given to a person."[26]

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22   See James Nkansah-Obrempong, "The Mission of the Church and Holistic Redemption," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 42 (2018): 203.

23   See B.D. Napier, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), s.v. "Vision."

24   Ibid.

25   See Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville; Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998); Logos.

26   See Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *Acts: A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the*

Three critical distinctions can be made about supernatural vision. First, God provides supernatural vision to a person of God in a dream and/or direct communication. Second, these visions do *not* change due to human or community circumstances. Third, due to its unchanging nature, supernatural vision is initiated by God alone; it is never initiated by humans.

Organizational Vision

On the other hand, organizational vision is always initiated by humans. Even though the leader seeks out God through prayer and the Bible, the leader is still the one who seeks the vision.[27] Also, since the vision begins with the leader being dissatisfied with the status quo, one can see that the human element is the beginning point.[28] Likewise, the leader is required to analyze the culture, self, and congregation, as mentioned by Mancini.[29]

Another difference between organizational vision and supernatural vision is that organizational vision changes due to its circumstances.[30] Similarly, when the community surrounding the church changes, a successful church will adapt its vision to reach its community. As mentioned above, supernatural vision never changes, because it is initiated by God.

Even though God is involved in both, organizational vision is human-initiated whereas supernatural vision is God-initiated. Christians are mistaken to equate supernatural vision and organizational vision. Therefore, I use the term *organizational vision* in this article, rather than the term *vision*.

Organization or Organism

Now that a proper definition for organizational vision and a distinction between organizational and supernatural vision have been established, the question as to whether a church *should* incorporate an organizational vision

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Apostles (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972); Logos.

27   See Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 44-55.

28   Ibid., 59-61.

29   Mancini, *Church Unique*, 85-89.

30   Anderson, *Leadership that Works*, 200-202; Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, 157.

needs an answer. The first issue to be addressed to answer this question is whether the church is an organization or an organism.

The Bible provides multiple passages to show that the church is an organism. First, the believers are considered "the sanctuary or temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells and the sanctuary of the living God," based on 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19.[31] Likewise, the Bible says the church is the body of Christ (Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12). The author of Hebrews says the church is the people of God (Hebrews 4:9). Paul also says in 1 Timothy 3:15 and Galatians 6:10 that the church is the household, or family, or God. This reference to family indicates a relational component to the church.

However, the Bible also shows the organizational side of the church.[32] One aspect is that Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 mention that all Christians have spiritual gifts, and they are expected to participate with their unique functions in the work of the ministry.[33] Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12:27-28, and 1 Timothy 3 mention titles and qualifications for leaders, indicating structure.[34] Similarly, an application of leadership is found in 1 Corinthians 14, which calls for orderly conduct in worship. Acts 6 is the clearest example of organization, as the Apostles, the leaders of the church in Acts, commission the first deacons to solve an issue within the church.[35]

Therefore, because the local church is *both* an organism and an organization, does this mean that organizational vision should guide the local church? Does the Bible allow churches to have organizational visions? Does the Bible provide examples of a local church having an organizational vision?

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31   See Robert H. Welch, *Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2005), 13.

32   See Harald Hegstad, *The Real Church: An Ecclesiology of the Visible* (Cambridge, UK: James Clark & Co., 2013), 127. In this book, the author defines *organization* as a formal gathering of people with a common goal. This will be the definition for organization used in this article.

33   See Welch, *Church Administration*, 13.

34   Ibid., 14.

35   Ibid., 14, 88.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL VISION

Because the Bible should be the authority for the local church (2 Timothy 3:16), then examining what the Bible says about organizational vision is crucial. This section will examine some passages that provide a rationale for organizational vision.

Without Vision, People Perish

Many leadership books geared for Christians mention Proverbs 29:18a as the primary text used to argue for organizational vision.[36] The verse says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV). Yet, other English translations have different wording for the verse. The CSB mentions, "Without revelation people run wild," whereas the ESV remarks, "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint." Likewise, the NIV states, "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint." What is the original intent of the author of the proverb?

Central to this translation debate is the word *chazon* (or *hazon*). Duane Garrett explained, "The word for 'revelation' is commonly associated with the visions of the prophets and stands for the importance of prophetic exhortation to the community here."[37] Notice that the second half of the verse says that "he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18b, KJV). Thus, the verse has nothing to do with organizational vision. The CSB is the closest translation to the true meaning of the verse, rather than the KJV. While this commonly used proverb is sometimes improperly interpreted, does the Bible provide any clear examples of organizational

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36   See Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 31; Barna, *Without a Vision, the People Perish*, 11; Bullard, *Captured by Vision*, ch. 3, "The Five Keys to Visionary Leadership," Kindle; Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus Revisited: Lessons from the Greatest Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 144, Kindle; Ed Stetzer, "Is Launching Large Good Church Planting Strategy?" *Christianity Today*, 8 December, 2015, accessed December 4, 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/december/is-launching-large-good-church-planting-strategy.html; Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 87.

37   Duane Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 231.

vision?

Old Testament Examples

Two examples of organizational vision can be examined within the Old Testament. The first example came during the life of Moses. Deuteronomy 8:7-9 describes a vision Moses cast to his followers.[38] He cast a vision of a land that was different from the land they experienced in the wilderness.[39] Likewise, this vision was an image that appealed to the Israelites' imaginations.[40]

The strongest case for organizational vision in the Old Testament is found in the book of Nehemiah, where the Nehemiah cast a vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.[41] This vision was initially established through emotional anguish caused by his nation's disobedience to God.[42] Nehemiah's vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem energized people to join in the project (Nehemiah 2:16-18).[43] When Nehemiah simply stated the solution to the issue of broken-down walls, the vision was cast to the people of Jerusalem.[44]

While Nehemiah is a clear example of vision casting, one needs to be careful and understand that the book of Nehemiah is not only about vision casting and leadership. None of the Church Fathers interpreted Nehemiah

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38   See Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 33.

39   See Timothy Gorringe, "Three Texts about Moses: Numbers 12, 16 and 20," *Expository Times* 4 (2007): 179.

40   See Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 33.

41   See Stanley, *Visioneering*, 18-19; Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 25; James Montgomery Boice, *Nehemiah: Learning to Lead* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990), 37-41; F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 158-164. Stanley and Malphurs expand on the story of Nehemiah throughout their books.

42   See Kenneth Tollefson, "Nehemiah, Model for Change Agents: A Social Science Approach to Scripture," *Christian Scholar's Review* 15 (1986): 109.

43   See Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry,* 25; Jonathan Ola Ojo, "Nehemiah's Model of Team Leadership: An Imperative for Church Administration in the 21st Century Ministry," *Practical Theology* 4 (2011): 182; William H. Edwards, "Rise up and Build," *Mid-Stream* 40 (2001): 64-65.

44   Stanley, *Visioneering*, 88.

through the lens of leadership.[45] Rather, these men drew parallels between the story of Nehemiah and Jesus Christ.[46] As David Shepherd and Christopher Wright stated, "While there is no doubting the practical appeal of such an approach, closer attention to the text of Nehemiah itself nevertheless points to the complexities of adopting Nehemiah as a model for leadership, let alone for Christian leadership."[47] Therefore, Nehemiah can be used for examples of leadership, and in the case of this article, organizational vision, but care must be exercised to not read too much into the examples.

New Testament Examples

Jesus exemplified organizational vision with the Sermon on the Mount. Rick Langer, in his chapter in *Organizational Leadership: Foundations & Practices for Christians*, mentions that "the Sermon on the Mount clearly casts a compelling vision of a possible future and a compelling moral vision as well. Furthermore, Jesus clearly modeled this vision in his own life."[48] Because this sermon was His first recorded public message, He was communicating His expectations for His followers.[49]

By examining the Sermon the Mount, one can see that Jesus did cast a vision for His followers to obey. First, He cast the picture of a blessed person in the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12).[50] Next, Jesus showed a picture of how His

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45   See Marco Conti, ed., *1–2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament, vol. 5 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 333-373.

46   Ibid.

47   David J. Shepherd and Christopher J. Wright, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, H Series: The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), accessed December 4, 2018, "Leadership and Ezra-Nehemiah," (EBSCO).

48   Rick Langer, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership," in *Organizational Leadership: Foundations & Practices for Christians*, eds. John S. Burns, John R. Shoup, and Donald C. Simmons Jr. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 79.

49   David Neville explained, "The first and most memorable of these sections is the Message on the Mountain, which presents Jesus' first words in public. . . . Matthew 5:1-2 suggests that Jesus directs his teaching to his disciples only, even though he has thus far called only four followers (4:18-22). Moreover, much of the content of Jesus' teaching in what follows makes sense only if one is committed to calibrating one's moral bearings to Jesus' vision of God's will and way in the world." David J. Neville, "The Moral Vision of Jesus in Matthew 5," *St. Mark's Review* 227 (2014): 47-49.

50   See Geoff Broughton, "Interpretative strategies for Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount' (Matthew

followers are to see their relationship with the world, as salt (preventing decay in the world) and as light (spreading good to the world) (Matt 5:13-16).[51] After this vision, Jesus shared a moral vision of how Christians are to treat their spiritual lives (Matt 5:21-7:6). Therefore, the Sermon on the Mount contains visionary ideas on how His followers should look to the world; however, organizational principles are not mentioned.

Another example of Jesus casting a type of organizational vision is in Mark 10:35-45. In this passage, Jesus shares a vision relevant to servant leadership.[52] This vision contrasts the cultural norm for leadership (10:42), which was based on hierarchy and the demand for followers to be servants, with servant leadership.[53] This vision shows that a servant's heart is the ideal for church leaders, rather than a demanding heart.[54]

The Apostle Paul was also a biblical example of a visionary leader. First, Paul had a long-term vision, according to Romans 15:24, to have a missionary journey to Spain. This vision emulates Jesus' commission for His disciples to preach the gospel message to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:18-20). Since Paul was satisfied with the saturation of the gospel in the eastern side of the Roman Empire, Paul wanted to focus on the western side, which was known as the edge of the world at the time.[55]

Another example of Paul being a visionary is the imagery Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 5:22-32. This imagery exhibits how church members are to function towards each other and with Christ.[56] His desire is to see the church members function interdependently, yet at the same time having Christ as the head of the body. These passages show an ideal standard Paul has for the church.

5-7)," *St. Mark's Review* 227 (2014): 22.

51   See William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 282-284.

52   See Rick Marrs, "Leadership: Jesus Style," *Graziadio Business Review* 20, no. 3 (2017): 2.

53   Ibid.

54   Ibid.

55   See Richard S. Ascough and Charles A. Cotton, *The Passionate Visionary: Leadership Lessons from the Apostle Paul* (Toronto: Novalis, 2005), 31-32.

56   See James D. G. Dunn, *Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 169.

The Bible provides sufficient examples of biblical characters implementing, at a minimum, early stages of organizational vision. Because biblical examples exist, a church leader can biblically cast an organizational vision for the local church. Such a vision should be a local implementation of the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

METHODS FOR VISION DEVELOPMENT

Prophet Method

The prophet method is based on the leadership style from the Old Testament. This method is illustrated as the pastor receives the vision from God and communicates the vision to the congregation.[57] Examples of this style are Moses, Joshua, and other prophets of the Old Testament.[58] While there are some weaknesses to this model, such as the common Baptist polity of congregational rule, this model can be effective when the church is in crisis or when the church is too large.[59]

Pastor Method

The pastor method for vision development is nearly the opposite of the prophet method. Karl Vaters described what happened on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2): "God the Holy Spirit spoke, not to one person, but to the entire assembled church. Then, after some sort of differentiation

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57   See Thom S. Rainer, *Eating the Elephant: Bite-Sized Steps to Achieve Long-Term Growth In Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 51; Karl Vaters, *Small Church Essentials: Field-Tested Principles for Leading a Healthy Congregation of Under 250* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2018), 170-171; Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1994), 130-140. Vaters expands on Rainer's definition by adding staff as a go-between for the pastor and the congregation. Yet, the principle remains the same: the vision originates from the pastor, and the congregation has relatively no input.

58   See Vaters, 172-173.

59   Ibid., 171. Vaters argues that the Acts 2 Model – which is referred to as the pastor model in this article – is the ideal model for vision development. Yet, he argues that the church that grows too large needs a prophet method for vision development. With that being said, his argument is contradictory, since the church in Acts 2 quickly grew to 3,000 people, which by his definition, would be too large.

of the leadership, Peter spoke to the larger community of people who had gathered in amazement about what was happening."[60] Thom Rainer mentions that "it would seem that the New Testament pattern would be one where God, through the giving of spiritual gifts and through His speaking to individuals about their call to ministry, would begin with the entire body rather than with a lone individual."[61]

The main difference between these two methods is to whom God gives the vision. In the prophet method, the pastor is the one who initiates the vision, but the pastor method has the congregation involved in the initiation of the vision. Credence can be found for both methods in the Bible. However, the explanation from Acts 2 by Vaters is incomplete.[62] Even though he stated that Peter was among the other apostles, nowhere in the text does it say Peter consulted with the other apostles.

ORGANIZATIONAL VISION IN CHURCH PLANTS AND REVITALIZATIONS

This article has presented a clear argument about organizational vision and how churches are welcome to implement one that flows from the mission of God. The final question that needs to be answered is how organizational vision is similar and different between church plants and church revitalizations. What are the benefits of organizational vision for both types of churches? What are the commonalities and variances between these two churches? This section will answer these questions.

Similar Benefits of Organizational Vision

Organizational vision provides focus. Because pastoral leadership should direct the congregation in the path they are supposed to follow, the pastor needs to have a vision that helps get the congregation focused in one main direction.[63] This vision also helps the church understand

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60   Ibid. 170.

61   Rainer, *Eating the Elephant*, 51.

62   Vaters, 168-170.

63   See Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 18.

what will not receive focus.[64] For example, a vision can help the church members understand that they will try to reach a certain neighborhood or demographic, yet they will not intentionally exclude anyone. The vision will help the leader and, ultimately, the church, know when to say *yes* and when to say *no*.[65]

Vision is important to the growth of a church. The first aspect of vision that helps a church grow is that it unites the members behind a common goal.[66] This unity also allows people in the congregation to be committed to the cause.[67] If the vision is properly articulated to connect the congregation's gifts to the community, then the vision will foster passion for people to be involved.[68] Congregational unity, commitment, and passion are three of many critical aspects of a growing church, whether it is a church plant or a church revitalization.[69]

Vision is critical to both church plants and revitalizations.[70] Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon Penfold explained, "Ministry without a clear, God-inspired vision is futile, because it fails to articulate what God has called it to do."[71] For church revitalization, vision is the primary focus for how churches will become healthy. Andy Stanley said, "*The catalyst for introducing*

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64   See Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 47.

65   Ibid., 48.

66   See Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 20-21; Kevin G. Harney, "Crystal-Clear Vision," in *The U-Turn Church: New Direction for Health and Growth*, ed. Kevin Harney and Bob Bouwer (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 48.

67   See Barna, *Without a Vision People Perish*, 79; Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, 16.

68   See Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 23-24; Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, 16; Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Community: Moving Your Church Beyond Tunnel Vision* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), 79.

69   See Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), ch. 6, "VIP: Congregation's Gifts and Passions," Kindle.

70   See Dale Proulx, "A Pietist Model for the Renewal of the Church" (D.Min. diss., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2002), 73; Jeff Christopherson and Mac Lake, *Kingdom First: Starting Churches That Share Movements* (Nashville, B&H Publishing, 2015), 129-130; Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, 17; Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), ch. 2, "Rising with Leadership" Kindle; Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting*, 97; Andrew M. Davis, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 24, 104-105.

71   Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 146.

and facilitating change in the local church is a God-honoring, mouthwatering, unambiguously clear vision."[72]

One of the core principles of leadership involves casting a vision for the organization.[73] Similarly, both church plants and revitalizations rely on effective leadership from the pastor.[74] Likewise, one of the pastor's critical roles is to be a leader.[75] Therefore, vision is critical for both a church plant and a revitalization.

Visionary Differences

The previous section described how organizational vision has similar benefits for both church plants and church revitalizations. Now, the question of how vision is different for church plants and church revitalizations will be analyzed. Three factors will be discussed: scope of the vision, who is included in the vision, and the source of the vision.

One difference between the organizational vision for a church plant and a church revitalization is the scope of the vision. Saddleback Church, planted by Rick Warren in 1980, is one of the more famous church planting stories in recent history. The vision Rick Warren presented on the first day of the new church is an example that the majority of church plants follow today (i.e., starting with a large and long-term vision).[76] Saddleback was one of the first churches to establish the idea of visioning an end goal from

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72   Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), ch. 12, "There, Not Here." Kindle.

73   See Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, 10; McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 102-105; Robert D. Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2016), 211; Bickers, *The Healthy Community*, 78-79.

74   See Rainer, *Breakout Churches*; Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 96-97; William M. Easum, *The Church Growth Handbook* (Nashville; Abingdon Press, 1990), 56-57.

75   See John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 22-24; Deron J. Biles, *Pastoral Ministry: The Ministry of a Shepherd* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), ch. 1 "Shepherds Must Lead the Flock," Kindle. While the authors use the term *shepherding*, one can clearly see the parallel between shepherding and leading.

76   Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 31-44. This vision was initially believed to last the entire length of his ministry, which would be 40 years. Even though the vision was fulfilled sooner than the allotted time length, the principle still stands true: the vision was a long-term vision.

the start, which is common practice and mentioned in church planting books today. This vision describes what the church will ultimately look like.[77] Searcy also recommended that after the church is established and stabilized, the church leaders need to develop a regular, long-term vision.[78] As David Shenk and Ervin Stutzman said, this long-term church "vision compels the church planter to move on until all peoples have had the opportunity to respond to the invitation of Jesus Christ."[79]

In contrast, church revitalizations tend to rely on a series on shorter-term visions. Gary McIntosh clearly states that due to low morale, a quick list of smaller visions will help boost enthusiasm in the congregation, while the larger overall vision may last approximately seven to ten years, depending on the congregational context.[80] One reason that visions need to be smaller in revitalizations is due to fear of change in these churches.[81]

Another factor requiring some church revitalizations to rely on shorter-term visions is the church's lack of trust in the pastor. Churches typically do not trust a new pastor until around seven years, which occurs after the crisis years, where turmoil was encountered and overcome.[82] One question the pastor and/or leaders need to ask themselves is whether the relational trust in them is large enough to sustain the changes necessary for revitalization.[83] Building trust leads to increased speed for change.[84] How does the pastor build trust? By being competent and building relationships.[85]

Another difference between the organizational vision in a church plant

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77   See J.D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 162-164; Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2017), 61-63.

78   Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 233-234.

79   David W. Shenk and Ervin R. Stutzman, *Creating Communities of the Kingdom: New Testament Models of Church Planting* (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1988), 63.

80   McIntosh, *There's Hope For Your Church*, 36, 63-69; Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, ch. 2, "When to Share Vision" Kindle.

81   See Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*, 107-109.

82   See Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*, 54.

83   See Jeff Iorg, *Leading Major Change In Your Ministry* (Nashville, B&H Academic, 2018), 43.

84   See Stephen M.R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 13-19.

85   See Iorg, *Leading Major Change*, 43; Covey and Merrill, *The Speed of Trust*, 41-232.

and a church revitalization is whether the congregation is included in the vision. In a church plant, the church typically only includes the pastor's gifts and the community's needs when developing the organizational vision.[86] This point is logical because church plants rarely start with a congregation.

Knowing the pastor's gifts and passions are critical to the start of a new church. The first step for many church planters is for them to have an assessment, which will analyze the church planter's character, spiritual gifts, passion, and temperament.[87] These aspects will help the church planters know where they are called to minister.[88] Likewise, the background of the church planter will be a critical factor for the future of the church in a particular community.[89] While it is important for church planters not to force their personalities and backgrounds on the new church, those factors will still be important in the church's development.

An important factor that should be included in a church plant's vision is the cultural context of the community. As J.D. Payne states, the people's "worldviews, music styles, dress, communication methods, structures, and organizations shape the local church."[90] Church planters are wise to know basic community demographics, which will include the average age, income, family size, racial makeup, and drive time to work.[91] As Rick Warren states, they should define the church plant's target demographically, culturally, and spiritually.[92] Warren continues by stating that the church should personalize their target audience; in the case of Saddleback Church, it was "Saddleback Sam."[93]

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86   This assumes that the church plant follows the missionary method for church planting, which is a model based on the pastor, or church planting team, moving to a new community to launch the church. Church plants can follow other methods, such as a group seeking out a church planter. In that case, this vision should include congregational strengths, which will mimic the church revitalization's organizational vision inclusions.

87   See Malphurs, *Planting a Church for the 21st Century*, ch. 5, "The Areas for Assessment." Kindle; Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting*, 28-35.

88   See Malphurs, *Planting a Church for the 21st Century*, ch. 5 "The Purpose of Assessment." Kindle; Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting*, 35.

89   See J.D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 187.

90   Ibid., 186.

91   See Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting*, 128.

92   Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 163-169.

93   Ibid., 169-170.

Contextualization is critical not only for church plants, but also for church revitalizations. Successful church revitalizations also include the gifts of the pastor and the community's needs in its vision. However, church revitalizations take a step further and include the congregational makeup when developing the vision.[94] Church revitalizations tend to analyze the community's needs and the congregation's strengths at the same time in order to find a potential ministry to the neighborhood.[95] After their churches' strengths are discovered, effective church revitalization pastors will mobilize their congregations by creating an atmosphere of expectation, equipping, and empowerment.[96]

An excellent example of a church utilizing this principle is Bayside Chapel of Barnegat, New Jersey, a non-denominational congregation of approximately 900 people, pastored by Dave Ridder. When Dave interviewed at this congregation in 2011, the interviewing committee requested to hear the vision he would cast if he were hired. Dave communicated that in order to cast a strong vision, he needed to know the congregational strengths and the community before he could know how the church could uniquely fulfill the Great Commission. His philosophy was to help lead people to the vision instead of giving them the vision.[97]

After Dave was given the opportunity to analyze the congregation and the community, he cast a vision to plant two churches in the region. He realized that church planting would be more effective in reaching the community. After analyzing the congregation's land use, Dave understood that Bayside Chapel would not be able to continue growing on its current property and would stagnate at the 900-person attendance mark. Therefore, Bayside Chapel committed to sending 150-200 people to each church plant in the region. Because of this decision to plant churches, approximately 1,150 people are now active in a Bible-believing church, through Bayside Chapel or its church plant, Wellspring Church, marking an overall growth

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94   See McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church*, 74-78; Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*, 160; Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, ch. 7, "Getting People Involved in Ministry," Kindle; Bob Bouwer, "Biblical Truths vs. Personal Preferences," 76-77.

95   See McIntosh, *There's Hope For Your Church*, 78.

96   See Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, ch. 7, "Three Components of Effective Laypeople Mobilization," Kindle.

97   Dave Ridder, interviewed by Chris Messerer, April 22, 2017.

of approximately 250 people reached in two and a half years.[98]

Another difference in organizational vision between a church plant and a church revitalization is the source of the vision. Who identifies and casts the organizational vision to the church? Should the prophet or pastor method of vision casting be used for a church plant or a church revitalization?

Church revitalizations are split between the two methods for casting a vision. One faction of the church revitalization field argues that organizational vision should be a fusion of the congregation and the pastor.[99] Gary McIntosh explained that the vision for church revitalization should include the pastor's passion, the congregation's passion, and the community's needs.[100] Later, McIntosh mentioned that the vision the pastor has in mind will be fully developed once the pastor discusses the vision with the leaders and eventually with influential members of the congregation.[101]

Likewise, Thom Rainer argued that the established church developing a new vision should follow this method, stating, "The pastor's role in this model is to discern what God is already doing in the church, communicate the vision to the people, and equip the people as they continue to develop ministries according to the vision."[102]

Dave Ridder of Bayside Chapel mimicked this method for casting a vision. As mentioned above, Dave sought the input of the congregation and the leadership team when establishing the vision. He did not begin at his church with a preconceived vision. His role in the vision process was to facilitate its development, communicate it to the congregation, and

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98   Dave Ridder, interviewed by Chris Messerer, November 21, 2018.

99   See Bill Henard, *Reclaimed Church: How Churches Grow, Decline, and Experience Revitalization* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2018), 94-95. While Henard does not explicitly state that the church should be involved in the vision, he clearly mentions the plural when describing the subjects for the ones following the vision. Earlier in the book, Henard mentioned that the reason why churches may not move on to a new vision is due to anger and focus on the past (11). Therefore, the leadership, no matter what method they implement in deciding the organizational vision, needs to understand that dealing with the past is crucial in the development of the organizational vision.

100   McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church*, 74-75.

101   Ibid., 78-89.

102   Rainer, *Eating the Elephant*, 52.

evaluate its effectiveness.[103]

The other faction advocates the prophet method.[104] Vaters mentions that the prophetic model of vision casting should only be used four different times: "1. When the church is in crisis; 2. When the church is in sin; 3. When the church is about to enter a very different, new season; 4. When the church is so big there is no practical way to take the congregation's temperature outside of a poll or survey."[105] At a minimum, two of the four characteristics can be identified in some church revitalizations: crisis and new season. Therefore, even though the author essentially argues for the pastor method of vision-casting, an argument can be made that some church revitalizations need the prophet method of vision-casting.

Brian Bond, the pastor of Greenwood Baptist Church in Weatherford, Texas, provides a prime example of a pastor utilizing the prophet method for vision-casting. When Brian came to the church in 2002, the personnel committee and the deacons expected the pastor to be the source of the vision.[106] While the deacons and Brian struggled on the direction of the church within the first few years, the congregation settled on following Brian's vision for Greenwood Baptist Church. Since 2002, when church attendance averaged around 150 people, attendance has grown to approximately 900 in 2018, and it will surpass 1,000 people in 2020 by following the vision that Bond cast in 2002. That vision helps people live out the core values of the church: "*Every one matters, every one gives, every one serves, every one changes, every one needs others, and saved ones find lost ones*."[107] Likewise, he established a vision for the church to switch from an insider/fellowship focus to an outsider/evangelism focus.

Both methods for casting the vision can be helpful in revitalizing a local church. The method used may be determined by the individual church and its polity. Unlike church revitalizations, church plants typically follow the prophet method for vision casting.[108] This practice is typical because church

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103   Dave Ridder, interviewed by Chris Messerer, April 22, 2017.

104   See Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*, 49.

105   Vaters, *Small Church Essentials*, 171.

106   Brian Bond, interviewed by Chris Messerer, November 14, 2018.

107   Ibid.

108   See Christopherson, *Kingdom First*, 129-131.

plants normally are started by a church planter or a church planting team; there is no congregation involved. Typically, church plants are established by a single person with a vision to plant a church, and that person will recruit a church planting team around that vision. Rainer, who argues for the pastor method of vision casting, agrees that church plants generally need to use the prophet method for casting their vision.[109]

CONCLUSION

An organizational vision is different for a church plant and a church revitalization. While both types of churches have their unique differences, they have several commonalities. The Bible provides examples of organizational vision being implemented in the lives of Moses, Nehemiah, Jesus, and Paul. Therefore, churches have biblical precedent to have their unique organizational visions, if those visions are based on the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

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109   Rainer, *Eating the Elephant*, 53.

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About the Author

Chris Messerer is a Ph.D. student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Chris is majoring in Church Administration and minoring in Church Vitalization. He received his M.Div. in Preaching and Communications from Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.