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Dear Servants of Christ:

It's *springtime*—a time of new beginnings, new growth, new possibilities. And it's the season of Holy Week that culminates in our celebration of Jesus' resurrection. We've posted some Holy Week resources at <http://www.wcg.org/MinDev/Web%20Documents/GC2%20equipper.htm>.

In the spirit of the season, this issue addresses the important topic of **ministry vision**. I was reminded of its importance at our recent annual Generations Camp directors' conference. Forty nine of us (camp directors, staffers and national leaders) gathered near Dallas to renew and celebrate the vision God has granted to us for camp ministry.

The meeting was an encouraging reminder of the power of discovering and pursuing a shared ministry vision. For Generations Camp Ministries the vision has unfolded through a journey of discovery that began in 2000 when several of us met to seek God's direction for WCG youth ministry. We left that meeting with the genesis of a 'dream' that God birthed in us.

When we met again in 2001, God added greater clarity to the dream—giving us a vision for multiplying from one national camp (in Orr, MN) to several. In faith, we walked forward in alignment with that vision. Then in 2005 we met again. During times of prayer, God added greater clarity to the unfolding vision. As a result, we left the meeting with a goal for 20 camps by the year 2010.

I'm thrilled to report that as we enter 2007, God has granted us 16 of those 20 camps. But in our meeting this year we affirmed what many of us have been sensing recently—namely that we are to enlarge the vision to 30 camps so that each of our new district pastoral networks may be served by and deeply connected with a Generations camp.

I share all of this with you to spread the joy of what God is doing in our fellowship, and to remind us all of the power of vision when it is granted by God and when we pursue it together in faith. I believe that a primary responsibility for Christian leaders is to gather a team in God's presence to discover, clarify and commit to a shared vision—God's vision for the ministry for which God has called and gifted the team. I pray that this issue of GC2 equipper will help you and your ministry team do just that.

- Ted Johnston, Generations Ministries director



He is risen!
And we are
alive in Him!

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What is vision? Where does it come from?



What is vision? For some, it seems mysterious and frustrating. Even disturbing. Unfortunately some of what has been written about vision in the church is nothing more than marketing ‘hype.’ But the hype is removed when vision is defined as a clear and compelling ‘picture’ (call it a ‘dream’) of what a congregation or ministry will look like when it’s faithfully fulfilling its God-ordained mission. According to this helpful and simple definition, **vision flows from mission.** Note what Aubrey Malphurs writes about mission:

“Leaders and their churches must have a direction, and it is the mission that provides that important direction. It answers the directional question, Where are we going? Thus the ministry’s mission...provides a compelling sense of direction, a target for everyone to aim at, and it serves to focus the congregation’s energy.”

[From “Developing a Mission.” You may read the full article at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bcl/areas/churchministries/articles/070314.html>]

In another article, Malphurs adds this concerning vision:

“I believe that vision is vital to your people seeing what ‘could be’ - what our great God can accomplish through them (Eph. 3:20) in your ministry community. Consequently, you need to develop a vision that provides a clear, compelling picture of your ministry’s future...Once you and the team have formulated your vision statement, you’ll need to cast it on a regular basis - at least once a month - primarily from the pulpit.”

[From “12 Key Strategic Steps for Leading Your Church.” Read the full article at: http://www.sermoncentral.com/article.asp?article=a-Aubrey_Malphurs1_1_07]



Jeb Egbert reminding GenMin camp directors of the vision God has granted to us

But where does vision come from?

How does one discover it?

Vision comes to us as the Spirit’s gift as we spend extended time ‘sitting in God’s presence’—both alone and with others, seeking together his will and direction for the ministry for which he has called and gifted us:

“A leader prays for God’s vision, waits, receives nothing. Prays some more, dies to self, waits, wonders, prays. Slowly faith begins to rise, slowly the pieces come together; the picture is rarely what he first thought it would be and is always larger than he would have constructed himself. It is no longer man-sized. Further, he finds that he is not at the center. This vision is God-sized, and it will take His power to produce it. The pastor knows it is God’s idea and He will bring it to pass, no question about it! The leader is passionate in his belief, and because of that, others catch the vision and work to see it occur. In the end, only God will get the glory.”

[From “The Power of Vision in Leading Your Church” by Michael Fletcher. You may read the full article at:

http://www.sermoncentral.com/article.asp?article=a-Michael_Fletcher_12_25_2006]



Tips for finding and pursuing God's vision

By Randy Bloom, Ted Johnston and Curtis May, MinDev team trainers

- Patiently and persistently seek God's vision for your ministry or congregation—and be sure it's God's vision that you seek, not your own.
- In the church, that vision will involve the outworking of the Great Commandment (to receive and express Jesus and his love) and the Great Commission (to make disciples who make disciples).
- God's vision is found by spending time in his presence—seeking and listening to him. Obeying him.
- God's vision is often unfolded to us one piece at a time over a long period of time (see page one as an example). God often gives only a small part of the 'dream' at first—bidding us to move forward one small first step in a certain direction. As we obey in faith, he shows us more. Such was the case for Abraham who was given a vision of being a father of many nations. Unfortunately, he tried at first to work it out his own way (through Hagar). But Abraham learned to trust God for each step of a gradually unfolding dream. In a similar way, Peter was given a vision of the acceptance of the gentiles into the fellowship of the church. He pursued this vision with only limited understanding at first—God gave more detail as he obeyed. Paul was given a vision about going to Macedonia. He changed course to pursue that vision, even though he did not know the details. The point is this: God's vision for us often unfolds one small part at a time. As we follow where he leads, he shows us more and the vision becomes clearer.
- God's vision (as compared to mere human vision) often emerges within community—leaders and workers prayerfully gathering in God's presence to listen and to discern the future that God has chosen for them.
- Vision is dynamic. It's fluid. It changes. It is not found or lived out merely through formulaic processes. Rather it often 'morphs' over time. This does not mean that leaders should not be organized, make strategic plans, etc. But strategies and plans are no substitute for continuing to seek God's vision, direction and course correction.
- The primary leader need not be the primary (and certainly not the only) source for the vision. Certainly, they should 'own' it—heart and soul. And they need to live it, preach it, talk about it and otherwise promote it—consistently and persistently. Remember, vision leaks badly.
- Leaders need to protect the vision. There will be plenty of people trying to alter it—often for selfish reasons. Leaders need to keep the vision from being derailed.
- The vision should not be merely about programs or buildings (though sometimes buildings and programs are helpful in pursuing God's vision for our congregation or ministry).
- The ultimate vision is often different than our initial understanding. Remain flexible and humble, holding plans in 'up-turned palms' before the Lord. Be willing to let him alter your vision.
- Pursuit of God's vision will often stretch you to new limits of faith and resources. It's not for the faint of heart. We must be ready, by his grace, to work harder (and smarter), sacrifice more, and live with uncertainty and ambiguity as never before. This is the life of freely, joyfully and passionately pursuing God's dream for us.

Need help discovering, clarifying and communicating God's vision for your congregation or ministry? The WCG Ministry Development team is here to help—we provide MinDev consultants and trainers who are experienced in conducting vision-discovery workshops and retreats. To schedule MinDev team services see our seminars and consulting webpage at <http://www.wcg.org/MinDev/events.htm>.

GC2 equipper is edited by Ted Johnston & published monthly by WCG Church Administration and Development (CAD). Note that our resource recommendations do not constitute unreserved endorsement. We welcome your questions, comments, short articles, resource recommendations, and testimonies. Send them to Ted.Johnston@wgc.org. *GC2 equipper* is posted on the WCG Ministry Development website at <http://www.wcg.org/mindev/>.